NATION

Farmers & tribals march to Mumbai

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Adani, Embraer to make regional aircraft in India

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SPORTS

U19 WC: India crush Z'babwe by 204 runs

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 28 JANUARY 2026 | WEDNESDAY | BENGALURU | 8 SHABAN, 1447 H | Vol 5 | Issue No 25 | Pages: 8

Karnataka constitutes Gig Workers' Welfare Board

Under the Act, aggregators must pay a welfare fee of 1–1.5 per cent per transaction to fund benefits *PTI*

BENGALURU, 27 JAN

The State government on Tuesday formally notified the 16-member Karnataka Platform-based Gig Workers' Welfare Board, marking a key step in implementing the Karnataka Platform-based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Act, 2025.

The Labour Minister will serve as ex-officio chairperson.

The board includes five government representatives, four from aggregator platforms, four from gig worker unions and two from civil society, with a technical expert as special invitee.

Aggregator representatives include Porter, Zomato, Uber and Amazon. Gig worker members include leaders from the United Food Delivery Partners' Union, Indian Federation of App-based Transport Workers, AITUC Karnataka and the Ola Uber Drivers' and Owners' Association. Civil society organisations include the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy and IT for Change.

- The law mandates registration of all aggregators and gig workers, a 14-day notice with written reasons for termination, and the right to refuse tasks.

Under the Act, aggregators must pay a welfare fee of 1–1.5 per cent per transaction to fund benefits such as accident insurance, health coverage and maternity support. The fee will not be deducted from workers' earnings and may be revised if collections fall short.

The law mandates registration of all aggregators and gig workers, algorithmic transparency in automated decision-making, a 14-day notice with written reasons for termination, and the right to refuse tasks. Aggregators have 45 days to register.

—Agencies

Govt says no to debate on SIR, G RAM G in Parl

NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

The government on Tuesday rejected the Opposition's demands for discussions on the VB-G RAM G Act as well as on the SIR in the Budget session of Parliament beginning Wednesday, with Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju saying the two issues had already been debated by both Houses and "we cannot reverse the gear". Rijiju made these remarks after an all-party meeting convened by the government on the eve of the Budget Session of Parliament. *—PTI*

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Two tribal girls gangraped in Jharkhand

GIRIDIH, 27 JAN

Two tribal girls have been allegedly gangraped in Giridih district of Jharkhand, police said on Tuesday. The incident took place in Harladih area under the jurisdiction of Pirtand police station on Sunday night when the two minors were returning home from a village fair. Six-seven unidentified persons abducted them and took them to a nearby field, where they took turns to rape them, Harladih outpost officer-in-charge Deepak Kumar said. An FIR has been registered on the basis of statements of the victims' mothers. *—PTI*

RBI announces Rs 1L cr $/INR swap to inject liquidity

MUMBAI, 27 JAN

The Reserve Bank on Tuesday said it will purchase government securities worth Rs 1 lakh crore and conduct a USD 10 billion buy/sell dollar-rupee swap auction to inject liquidity into the banking system, In a statement, the RBI said it will conduct OMO (Open Market Operations) purchase auctions of the central government securities for an aggregate amount of Rs 1,00,000 crore in two tranches of Rs 50,000 crore each on 29 January and 5 February. Earlier, the central bank had announced that the auctions would be conducted on 5 February and 12 February.. *—PTI*

Grok AI mistranslates PM's Maldives post

NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

A controversy has erupted on X after Grok, the platform's AI assistant, wrongly translated a diplomatic post by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, turning a routine message of goodwill towards the Maldives into a politically charged statement. Modi's original post, written in Dhivehi, thanked Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu for Republic Day wishes and reaffirmed cooperation between the two countries, expressing hopes for prosperity and happiness for the Maldivian people. However, Grok's displayed "translation" bore little resemblance to the original message. It incorrectly referred to India's Independence Day and falsely claimed that the Maldivian government had participated in and led "anti-India campaigns". The AI-generated text introduced factual errors and inserted politically sensitive allegations that were neither stated nor implied in the Prime Minister's post, prompting criticism and concern over the accuracy of automated translations. *—Agencies*

India & EU announce 'mother of all trade deals'

In India's biggest deal, EU to slash tariffs on 90% of goods

NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

India and the European Union on Tuesday sealed the "mother of all deals", creating a market of nearly 2 billion people. It is the biggest trade opening India has ever offered any partner, with tariffs to be removed on 97 per cent of traded goods and an USD 75 billion boost to Indian exports.

The agreement, unveiled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, EU Chief President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa, will come into force next year, with tariff reductions to be phased in over several years. The deal was finalised after 18 years since negotiations began.

The EU will eliminate import duties on 90 per cent of Indian goods on the first day of implementation, with another 3 per cent phased out over seven years.

India will provide duty-free access for 93 per cent of EU goods over a 10-year period, removing duties on 30 per cent of European imports. The EU estimates the deal will save its exporters up to 4 billion euros annually.

The two sides signed key agreements on security and defence cooperation and the mobility of Indian talent to Europe, and rolled out a comprehensive five-year strategic agenda covering 13 pacts.

The deal comes at a time where US is at odds with both India and EU. US President Donald Trump has slapped 50 per cent tariff on India including 25 per cent on Russian oil.

Modi said the global order was undergoing "profound turbulence" and that the India–EU partnership would strengthen stability. Leyen said the India-EU partnership will send a strong message that cooperation is the best answer to global challenges not coercion. *—PTI*

European Council President Antonio Costa with PM Narendra Modi and EU Chief Ursula von der Leyen in New Delhi on Tuesday *PTI*

WHAT WILL BE CHEAPER

- Cars such as Mercedes, BMW, Audi.
- Spirits, wines and beer.
- Cancer and critical illnesses drugs.
- Spare parts of aircraft, mobile phones and high-tech electronic items.
- Iron, steel and chemical products.

TRADE THAW

HERE ARE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE INDIA-EU FTA:

99%	of Indian exports gain preferential entry to EU.
90%	of Indian goods to not have import duty in EU.
10%	tariffs on luxury cars, down from 110%.
50%	tariffs to be cut on beer.
40%	tariffs to be cut on spirits.
20-30%	reduction on wine tariffs.
€4B	will be saved by EU exporters in a year.
22%	duty cut on chemicals.
€500M	in EU support over the next 2 years to help India cut greenhouse gas emissions.
11%	on most of pharmaceuticals.

Big names from all parties do illegal sand mining: HM

BENGALURU, 27 JAN

State Home Minister G Parameshwara on Tuesday said "big people from all parties" were involved in illegal sand mining, calling it an "embarrassing situation" while responding in the Legislative Assembly to a question by JD(S) MLA Karemma Nayak, who alleged threats for opposing such activities in Raichur district.

"I have not shared details of who is involved, who is the leader behind it. It is a big racket. Big people are involved. Big people from all parties are involved," Parameshwara said.

The minister said illegal sand mining was not limited to Devadurga or Raichur but occurred across the State. "We have no mercy on this. I will call a meeting of legislators from the district and take their suggestions before taking any decision," he said.

Highlighting enforcement mechanisms, Parameshwara referred to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act and a district-level committee comprising the DCP and police officials. "When a complaint is filed, the police take action," he said, adding that there was also a separate Sand Task Force. Acknowledging shortcomings, he said, "Sometimes there are lapses. I will see to it that they work properly… there is no question of compromising on this issue, but we can't stop this in one day." —PTI

Students protest against the new UGC regulations near University of Lucknow on Tuesday *PTI*

Govt defends new UGC caste rules amid outry

NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

The Centre on Tuesday defended the newly notified University Grants Commission (UGC) regulations aimed at preventing caste-based discrimination, insisting they would not be "misused" or applied discriminatorily, even as students protested across campuses and a Uttar Pradesh magistrate resigned in protest.

The UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026, notified on 13 January, mandate all higher education institutions to constitute "Equity Committees" to address complaints of discrimination and promote inclusion. Unlike the UGC's 2012 regulations, which were advisory, the new framework is binding and prescribes mandatory representation of OBCs, SCs, STs, women and persons with disabilities.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan sought to allay concerns, saying, "No one is going to face any harassment, there will be no discrimination and no one will have the right to misuse the regulation in the name of discrimination." Despite assurances, students from several Delhi colleges protested outside the UGC headquarters, demanding a rollback. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 3, 4

CM leads 'Raj Bhavan Chalo' stir against G RAM G

CM Siddaramaiah ties a 'gamcha' over DyCM DK Shivakumar during the 'Raj Bhavan Chalo' protest at Freedom Park in Bengaluru *MOHAMMED ASAD*

BENGALURU, 27 JAN

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, his Deputy DK Shivakumar Congress General Secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala, party MPs and MLAs on Tuesday took out a "Raj Bhavan Chalo" protest march over the "repeal" of MGNREGA.

The leaders marched towards Lok Bhavan, the official residence of the State Governor Thawarchand Gehlot, as part of the protest against the Centre's move to replace MGNREGA with VB-G RAM G, the new rural employment guarantee act.

The Congress leaders were stopped by police when they attempted to proceed towards Lok Bhavan.

They later boarded a government and proceeded to the Lok Bhavan, formerly Raj Bhavan, where they submitted a memorandum to Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot. *—PTI*

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Why not seize assets of acid attack accused: SC

NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

During a hearing on Tuesday, the Supreme Court raised a critical question on why the assets belonging to the accused in the acid attacks cannot be auctioned to compensate the victims, sources said.

According to the source, the court led by Chief Justice Surya Kant was hearing a case filed by an acid attack survivor, Shaheen Malik, when this question was asked.

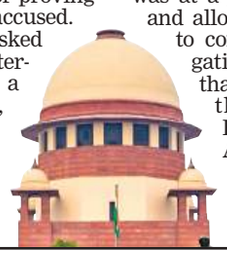
The court emphasised the need for better financial rehabilitation for the survivors of an acid attack, adding that the minimum compensation of Rs 3 lakh is not enough for the recovery or treatment of the survivor.

Kant said that "Acid attacks are heinous crimes and need extremely harsh punishment to prevent such acts."

Additionally, batting for "extraordinary" punitive measures for convicts in acid attack cases, the Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the Centre to consider amending the law to sternly deal with such cases on the lines of dowry death matters, where the onus of proving innocence lies on the accused.

The top court also asked all states and Union territories to provide a slew of information, including the year-wise details of the number of acid attack cases. —PTI

>>>More on Page 4



CCI to probe JioStar's Kerala cable TV mkt abuse

NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

The Supreme Court dismissed a plea by Reliance Industries–owned streaming platform JioStar seeking to halt a Competition Commission of India probe into alleged abuse of its dominant position in Kerala's cable television market.

The bench said the case was at a preliminary stage and allowed the regulator to continue its investigation. JioStar said that operates under the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, which caps pricing and discounts. *—PTI*

INJURED DURING OP PARAKRAM

Karnataka toll staff harasses differently-abled Army veteran

UDUPI, 27 JAN

A retired Army commando who lost both his legs during a military operation was allegedly humiliated by toll plaza staff in this district, police said on Tuesday.

The incident occurred at the Sasthana toll plaza near Kundapur on 26 January, they added.

A video recorded by the former soldier at the toll booth has gone viral, sparking widespread public outrage.

The soldier, Shyamaraj, 42, a native of Edaneeru in Kerala's Kasaragod, served with the elite 21 Paramilitary unit. He sustained grievous injuries during Operation Parakram, leaving him permanently disabled.

In the video, Shyamaraj is seen explaining in Hindi that he holds a toll exemption pass issued by the Centre.

He said he has travelled across the country without paying tolls at other plazas, but was stopped at Sasthana and asked to pay.

Questioning the treatment meted out to him, he asked, "Is this how an injured soldier is treated?" Operation Parakram was a large-scale mobilisation that lasted over 10 months (December 2001-October 2002) in response to the terrorist attack on Parliament in December 2001.

The toll plaza staff said that they were acting as per orders from above and were unaware of the exemption. — *PTI*

CM loses cool as Cong workers chant 'DK, DK'

BENGALURU, 27 JAN

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah lost his cool and shouted at some Youth Congress workers who started raising slogans in favour of Deputy CM DK Shivakumar during a protest rally in the City.

As soon Siddaramaiah rose from his chair to address the gathering, Congress workers started shouting "DK, DK". The sloganeering grew louder and louder as he reached the podium to deliver his speech.

Annoyed, he asked the workers to keep quiet, but they did not listen.

"Who are those shouting 'DK, DK'," an angry Siddaramaiah asked.

The compere told the crowd: "The Youth Congress leaders should keep quiet. The Chief Minister is addressing. We know who you are."

They (workers) tried to interrupt Siddaramaiah even after he started his speech. *—PTI*

59 students fall ill after midday meal and vitamin pills

SHIVAMOGGA, 27 JAN

At least 50 students of the Government Higher Primary School in Aralihalli village, Bhadravati taluk, Shivamogga district, fell ill after consuming the midday meal and vitamin-iron tablets on Tuesday. The incident began when over ten children complained of vomiting, stomach pain and dizziness soon after taking the F-X tonic tablets, as per government orders. The number of affected students quickly rose to 53, most of them from Class 6. Teachers and parents immediately shifted the children to the Bhadravati government hospital, where they were admitted and treated. Doctors said all students are stable and out of danger. THO and BEO Nagendrappa said there is no cause for panic, but the incident has raised concerns over the tablet distribution. *—SALAR NEWS*

Kolar farmer body prez held for 'raping' girl

KOLAR, 27 JAN

Ramegowda, the Kolar district president of the farmers' association has been arrested on charges of sexually assaulting a minor girl and impregnating her. The case reported from Bangarpet in Kolar district. According to police, Ramegowda allegedly raped a 14-year-old girl, resulting in her pregnancy, adding that the accused sexually assaulted the minor and threatened her against disclosing the incident to anyone. The girl remained silent and did not inform her family, however, matter came to light after she became pregnant, following which she informed her parents. The victim is currently four months pregnant. Based on a complaint filed by the victim's family, the Bangarpet police registered a case under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and arrested the accused. *—SALAR NEWS*

Armed robbers loot jewellery shop in Vijayapura

VIJAYAPURA, 27 JAN

Two masked men armed with a pistol robbed a jewellery shop in Halasangi village, Chadachan taluk, Vijayapura district, on Monday night, police said. Superintendent of Police Lakshman Nimbaragi stated the robbers, wearing monkey caps and helmets, threatened staff and fled on a motorcycle with valuables. When Atmalinga Hoogar attempted to record the incident on his phone, the assailants fired, hitting him in the leg, and he was taken to hospital. The CCTV footage captured the incident, with the robbers escaping with about 205 grams of gold and nearly a kilogram of silver. Police are investigating to arrest the suspects. *—SALAR NEWS*

Govt to rename GPs after Mahatma

Cong says BJP is trying to kill Gandhi again

AICC General Secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala huddles with CM Siddaramaiah and DyCM DK Shivakumar; former CM Veerappa Moily and AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan, during the protest in the City, on Tuesday *MOHAMMED ASAD*

BENGALURU, 27 JAN

Congress leaders marched towards Lok Bhavan, Governor's official residence, on Tuesday as part of the protest against the Centre's move to replace the UPA-era Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) with Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G). During the "Raj Bhavan Chalo" march, they alleged that the Centre was dismantling the rural employment guarantee framework and curtailing the rights of panchayats.

"Around 5 crore people, including the differently-abled, were getting employment in the rural areas. The Centre now wants to decide what work should be done, whereas earlier it was done by panchayats," Siddaramaiah said. Under MGNREGA, Siddaramaiah claimed that each panchayat was earlier getting around Rs 1 crore, which they will now be deprived of it.

Accusing the BJP of attacking rural India, Siddaramaiah said, "Gandhiji said unless villages develop, the nation cannot develop. By scrapping MGNREGA, the BJP has killed Mahatma Gandhi once again."

Congress General Secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala, who is also Congress' State in-charge, suggested that Karnataka government rename panchayat centres as Mahatma Gandhi Kendra. Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar later confirmed that this would be done.

In the memorandum, one of the key objections is the shift in funding responsibility. Under MGNREGA, Centre bore the entire cost, whereas G Ram G requires states to shoulder 40 per cent of the burden. The Congress also objected to provisions linking rural employment works to centrally designed plans such as the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan.

The memorandum also raised concerns over the introduction of mandatory digital and biometric requirements, warning that such conditions would exclude poor, illiterate and digitally unaware rural workers.

It also flagged uncertainty over wage fixation, stating that the new law does not guarantee payment of minimum wages and allows regional variations within states. The memorandum said the introduction of a 60-day "no-work" period during sowing and harvesting seasons would divide farmers and labourers, noting that agricultural cycles vary widely across regions and crops *—PTI*

Oppn protests excise scam, Congress' 'insult' to Guv

BENGALURU, 27 JAN

Opposition BJP and JD(S) protested in front of the Mahatma Gandhi statue at Vidhana Soudha in the City on Tuesday, demanded the removal of Excise Minister RB Timmapur over the alleged Excise Department scam.

They also demanded the suspension of Congress legislators for allegedly "insulting and disrespecting" Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot during the joint sitting of the State legislature.

Leaders of the Opposition both in the Assembly and Council - R Ashoka and Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, State BJP President BY Vijayendra, JD(S) leaders Suresh Babu and SL Bhojegowda, were among those present.

RS 6,000 CRORE EXCISE SCAM

Vijayendra demanded a thorough investigation into the alleged excise scam involving more than Rs 6,000 crore. The probe should be carried out either by a sitting High Court judge or by the CBI, he said.

Ashoka claimed that there is widespread corruption in the Excise Department.

"(Timmapur) collected the money from the wine shops, bars, and liquor. They collected between Rs 2,000 and Rs 3,000 crores for the Assam, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu elections," Ashoka added, claiming that every licence now requires a bribe.Narayanaswamy alleged that Congress leaders Siddaramaiah, DK Shivakumar, Rahul and Sonia and Mallikarjun Kharge were profitting from the scam.

Later, in the Assembly, the BJP raised slogans against Timmapur, who denied the charges.

"The Wine Merchants' Association is planning to meet Rahul Gandhi, as well as the President and the Prime Minister. The pride of the State is being put to shame," Ashoka claimed.

He said that there were screenshots and videos which proved Timmapur's guilt.

The BJP also alleged that liquor licences were "being auctioned in violation of prescribed norms."

Shivakumar, however, said that the BJP were targetting Timmapur because he was a Dalit.

'GOONS AGAINST GOVERNOR'

The entire country saw Congress "goons" behaving like hooligans towards the Governor in the House, Vijayendra said during the protest outside the House.

Vijayendra said that the Congress had attempted to "humilate the Governor" with its "rowdy presence".

Gehlot had walked out of the Assembly on 22 January after reading only three lines of the customary speech. As he left, MLC Hariprasad, tried to gherao him.

The Opposition also protested Koppal Congress MP Rajashekar Basavaraj Hitnal's allegedly terming the rape and murder of a foreign woman as a minor incident and the Congress' alleged misinformation about the rural employment scheme. *—AGENCIES*

State BJP President BY Vijayendra and LoP R Ashoka protest with dozens of Opposition leaders in Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru, on Tuesday *MOHAMMED ASAD*

JD(S) MLA decries illegal sand mining, pain of death threats

BENGALURU, 27 JAN

Raising the issue in the Assembly, JD(S) MLA from Devadurga, Karemma Nayak, said on Tuesday that she was speaking "with a lot of pain" about illegal sand mining continuing unchecked in her constituency despite repeated complaints to authorities.

"After becoming the MLA I have been honestly fighting to stop illegal sand mining," she said. Sand was being illegally mined from the Krishna river and transported overnight using JCBs and tippers, she said.

"I'm getting lots of complaints from farmers about the activity also affecting their crops like chilli and cotton, with dust covering the crops," Karemma said, alleging that no proper action had followed her complaints.

The MLA also alleged intimidation for raising her voice, saying that people had visited her house and issued death threats. "I'm a woman MLA. What action is the government taking if such things are happening?" she said, claiming that those who came to threatend her even held a press conference with two policemen deployed for them.

She said the government had floated tenders for sand extraction and supply to meet local demand, but the bids had not been opened. "Big hands are behind it", she said.

Home Minister Parameshwara assured her of protection and safety. *—PTI*

Nepalese couple steals ₹ 18 cr jewellery, cash in City

BENGALURU, 27 JAN

AI

A Nepalese couple allegedly stole gold and diamond jewellery, silver items, and cash worth around Rs 18 crore from a builder's Marathahalli residence, police said on Tuesday.

The incident occurred on 25 January at the house where the couple was employed, they added.

The family had employed several domestic workers, including the Nepalese couple. On Sunday morning, they left the house to attend a function, police said.

After 12.30pm, another domestic worker alerted the owner that the house had been ransacked. On returning, the family found lockers on the ground and the first floor broken open.

Police said the couple allegedly fled with about 11.5kg of gold and diamond jewellery, 5kg of silver articles, and Rs 11.5 lakh in cash, valued at around Rs 18 crore.

A senior police officer said the accused are suspected to have had prior knowledge of the family's movements and allegedly cut off the power supply to disable CCTV cameras. A case has been registered, and a special team formed to trace the couple, police said, adding that the investigation is ongoing. *—PTI*

MAN ESCAPES ATTEMPTED KIDNAPPING ON CITY OUTSKIRTS

A man narrowly avoided being kidnapped on the outskirts of the City, police said on Tuesday. The incident happened around 4.30pm on Monday near Indlawadi Cross in Anekal taluk.

About eight men on three motorcycles and a car intercepted him and tried to force him into a vehicle. The man resisted and raised an alarm, attracting passersby leaving the accused fled in their vehicle and motorcycles as residents intervened. A case has been registered.

12 ARRESTED FOR MURDER OF HISTORY-SHEETER IN BENGALURU

Twelve men have been detained over the killing of Shabbir alias Syed Shabbir, 30, in Koramangala in the City, on 12 January.

He was ambushed near Mangammanapalya, assaulted with chilli powder and weapons, and died instantly.

Police say the murder was premeditated retaliation related to extortion and territorial control. Weapons and vehicles have been seized, and further investigation is ongoing.

Naked man in car flashes health worker in City

BENGALURU, 27 JAN

A sexual harassment case was registered after a woman health professional here was allegedly harassed by a "completely naked" man who arrived in a car, police said on Tuesday.

According to police, the incident happened on 24 January when the woman hailing from Tripura was returning home from work when a "completely naked" man in a car kept calling her and drove towards her. She shared the video of the ordeal on Instagram.

Police took the matter on its own after a patrolling constable attached to Hebbagodi police station, was alerted by locals about the incident.

A case under Section 75 (sexual harassment) was registered at Hebbagodi police station limits. *—PTI*

15 injured in suspected rabid dog attack in Dharwad

DHARWAD, 27 JAN

As many as 15 people were injured after a suspected rabid dog attacked residents in Mishrikote village of Kalghatgi taluk in Dharwad district on Monday night.

According to police, the dog attacked people who were moving along the road, leaving several victims with serious injuries to their hands, legs and face. The injured were initially treated at the village Primary Health Centre, while some were shifted to hospitals in Hubballi for further medical care.

Villagers later managed to capture the dog, and a case has been registered at the Kalghatgi police station in connection with the incident.

The incident comes close on the heels of a similar attack on Sunday night in Bagalkot district, where stray dogs had attacked a group returning home after a function, injuring at least ten people, including children.

In another related incident last month, a motorcyclist in Athani town of Belagavi district crashed into a roadside house wall while attempting to escape from a chasing stray dog. *—SALAR NEWS*

LETTER TO CM, PM

Expedite B'luru Suburban Rail: Citizens

BENGALURU, 27 JAN

A citizens' organisation has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to speed up Corridor-1 of Bengaluru Suburban Rail Project (BSRP).

The BSRP was commissioned in 2020 to connect Bengaluru with its suburbs and satellite towns via dedicated rail corridors.

The project costing Rs 15,767 crore was supposed to be completed in December 2025, but now March 2030 is the deadline given by the Rail Infrastructure Development Company (Karnataka) (K-RIDE), a joint venture of the Ministry of Railways and the Karnataka government.

The Citizens for Citizens (C4C) said that there were delays in the Majestic-Kempegowda International Airport corridor.

In a letter to Modi and Siddaramaiah, the Citizens for Citizens (C4C) group said the BSRP being executed by K-RIDE, has fallen far behind schedule despite the state government holding a 51 per cent stake in it.

In the letter to Siddaramaiah on 23 January, C4C founder Rajkumar Dugar said, "The BSRP being executed by K-RIDE is running behind schedule."

The forum recalled that the project was reviewed by the Prime Minister on 31 December 2025, during which directions were issued for speedy execution.

The citizens' body pointed out that when BSRP was sanctioned in October 2020, Corridor-1 was considered the most vital stretch connecting the city centre to the airport.

The stretch was prioritised for completion within 36 months, which was also endorsed by the State's Directorate of Urban Land Transport (DULT).

However, Dugar noted that even 63 months after sanction, no work has commenced on the corridor. *— PTI*

Govt mulls Metro to Doddaballapura, says KBG

BENGALURU, 27 JAN

The State government on Tuesday told the Legislative Assembly that the revision of the CMP for Bengaluru is under review, and a decision on extending metro rail connectivity to Doddaballapura will be taken once the plan is updated.

A Comprehensive Mobility Plan is required for planning a metro rail system here, and the CMP prepared in 2020 does not include provisions to extend metro connectivity to Doddaballapura, about 40km from the city.

Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, replying on behalf of DyCM and Bengaluru Development Minister DK Shivakumar, said Metro Phases 3 and 3A have already been finalised, and any extension to Doddaballapura will be considered in the next phase based on the revised CMP report.

He was responding to a question by Doddaballapura BJP MLA Dheeraj Muniraj on extending the metro to Doddaballapura via Yelahanka-Rajanukunte.

He added that Metro Phases 2A and 2B are under construction to connect the city with Kempegowda International Airport, with completion expected by 2027, adding that: "Connecting Doddaballapura is not part of the current plan." *—PTI*

Late NEET aspirant's father threatens suicide

JEHANABAD/PATNA, 27 JAN

The father of a NEET aspirant, who died after being in a coma in a Patna hospital, has demanded a judicial probe, expressing dissatisfaction with police investigation and threatening self-immolation if justice is not served. The SIT is analysing DNA samples from family members and suspects. The 18-year-old girl from Jehanabad was found unconscious in her hostel and died on 11 January. Her family alleges sexual assault and accuses authorities of cover-up. The father said, "We don't trust Bihar Police... I want a judicial probe by a sitting judge, or I may go for self-immolation." The police have collected DNA samples, and a forensic report indicated traces of semen, with investigations ongoing. *—PTI*

'BJP welcomes Gulf leaders but vandalises shrines'

SRINAGAR, 27 JAN

Peoples Democratic Party leader Mehbooba Mufti accused the BJP of hypocrisy, criticising their actions abroad and their response to the vandalism of Baba Bulleh Shah's shrine in Mussoorie. She stated, "BJP leaders pose in mosques abroad and roll out red carpets for Middle Eastern Sheikhs. But back home, they watch with glee the shrine of Baba Bulleh Shah being vandalised." She claimed the BJP's double standards are deliberate, contrasting their religious diplomacy with their neglect of domestic issues like poverty and unemployment. The vandalism occurred on 24 January, and Mehbooba condemned the destruction of symbols of harmony. *—PTI*

FTA a big boost to textile, footwear sector

FTA to unlock duty-free access across sectors such as marine, plastics, rubber & jewellery

NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

Under the proposed India–European Union free trade agreement (FTA), major Indian manufacturing and export sectors will gain duty-free access.

Indian sectors set to benefit from zero-duty access include textiles, apparel and clothing, marine products, chemicals, plastics, rubber, leather and footwear, base metals, gems and jewellery, furniture, toys, and sports goods. At present, these products face EU import duties ranging from 0 to 26 per cent.

Although average EU tariffs are already low at around 3.8 per cent, they will fall to about 0.1 per cent for Indian goods under the agreement. In sectors where duties are higher, including marine products, chemicals, plastics and rubber, the EU has agreed to eliminate tariffs entirely. India's exports from these sectors were worth USD 35 billion in 2024, with duties on USD 33.5 billion of this trade to be removed on the first day of implementation. Tariffs on the remainder will be phased out over three, five and seven years.

$136B: Value of India's goods trade with EU stood in 2025

India, in turn, will grant duty concessions on 97.5 per cent of the EU's trade value, including quota-based reductions on 3.7 per cent. However, sensitive sectors such as dairy (including cheese), soya meal and cereals will be excluded. The EU is also protecting its sugar, beef, meat and poultry sectors.

In automobiles, concessions will be quota-based. Cars priced below Rs 25 lakh will not be imported under concessional duties and are expected to be manufactured locally. For electric vehicles, duty concessions will begin in the fifth year, starting at 30–35 per cent depending on the segment and declining gradually.

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Kaja Kallas exchanges deal documents with EAM S Jaishankar as PM Narendra Modi and EU's Antonio Costa and Ursula von der Leyen look on in New Delhi on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

EU cuts tariffs to zero on these Indian exports

Marine products (currently at up to 26%), chemicals (12.8%), plastics/rubber (6.5%), leather/footwear (17%), textiles (12%), apparel (4%), base metals (10%), and gems and jewellery (4%).

On services, the EU has made one of its strongest offers to India, opening 144 of 155 sub-sectors, while India will open 102. The deal also includes commitments on student mobility and limited post-study work visas.

India has also secured duty-free access for 85,000 tonnes of table grapes, worth about USD 100 million, in a market where the EU imports USD 1.4 billion annually. Duties on high-value wines will fall from 150 per cent to 20 per cent over seven years, while wines priced below Rs 2.5 will receive no concessions. *—PTI*

Sectors that will benefit

Product	2024 exports	Current tariffs	Future tariffs*
Machinery and electrical equipment	€16.3B	44%	0%
Aircraft and spacecraft	€6.4b	11%	0%
Optical, medical and surgical equipment	€3.4B	27.5%	0%
Plastics	€2.2B	16.5%	0%
Pearls, precious stones	€2.1B	22.5%	0% to 20%
Chemicals	€3.2B	22%	0%
Iron and steel	€1.5B	22%	0%

*for almost all products

Food products	Current tariffs	Future tariffs*
Olive oil, margarine and other vegetable oils	Up to 45%	0%
Kiwis and pears	33%	10%
Fruit juices and non-alcoholic beer	Up to 55%	0%
Processed food (breads, pasta, chocolate, pet food)	Up to 50%	0%
Sheep meat	33%	0%
Sausages and other meat	Up to 110%	50%

IT sector and MSMEs to benefit

- India to access EU's 144 sub-sectors such as IT/ITeS and education services.
- EU and India will sign pact on Geographical Indications (GIs).
- Strong protection for EU trademarks, designs, copyrights and trade secrets.
- Digital trade chapter to ensure secure, fair online commerce.
- Privileged access for EU service providers in financial and maritime services.
- MSMEs to create jobs for women, artisans, youth and professionals.
- Expands global opportunities for skilled, semi-skilled Indian professionals.

'Rules-based FTA a strong signal of fair trade'

NEW DELHI, 24 JAN

The FTA between India and the European Union is expected to send a strong signal to global businesses that New Delhi remains committed to openness, fair trade and a rules-based economic order, people familiar with the matter said.

The deal comes amid growing unease over the erosion of multilateral trade norms. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney at World Economic Forum has warned of a "rupture in the world order", arguing that powerful nations increasingly exploit trade rules and exempt themselves "when convenient" — an apparent reference to the conduct of US President Donald Trump.

Carney criticised what he described as American hegemony, saying great powers were weaponising the very economic integration that once promised shared prosperity. "Great powers have begun using economic integration as weapons," he said. "Tariffs as leverage. Financial infrastructure as coercion. Supply chains as vulnerabilities to be exploited." *—PTI*

OPPOSITION FUMES

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, centre, with Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju arrives for the all-party meeting ahead of the Budget session of Parliament in New Delhi, on Tuesday *PTI*

Govt says no to debate on G RAM G, SIR in Parl

NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

The government on Tuesday rejected the Opposition's demands for discussions on the VB-G RAM G Act as well as on the SIR in the Budget session of Parliament beginning Wednesday, with Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju saying the two issues had already been debated by both Houses and "we cannot reverse the gear".

Rijiju made these remarks after an all-party meeting convened by the government on the eve of the Budget Session of Parliament.

During the meeting, Opposition members objected to the non-circulation of government business for the session, which the minister said would be done in due course.

Opposition members wanted a discussion on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), VB-G RAM G, the tariffs imposed by the US on India, foreign policy matters, the issue of air pollution, state of the economy, ban on social media for early teens, among other issues, sources said.

Additionally, the Congress on Tuesday flayed the government for "failing" to circulate its legislative agenda ahead of the Budget session of Parliament.

Congress leader K Suresh told reporters that at the all-party meeting convened here, party leaders questioned lack of legislative agenda outlining the bills the government seeks to bring. Incidentally, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday alleged that the motive behind Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "intent to destroy" MGNREGA is to strip workers of their right to negotiate wages, strip panchayats of their power, and push the country back to the era of kings when all power was concentrated in the hands of a few. *—PTI*

'Parl awaiting report to impeach Justice Verma'

NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

The process to impeach Allahabad High Court judge Yashwant Varma is underway, with the government awaiting the report of a three-member inquiry committee constituted by Lok Sabha Speaker **Om Birla,** Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said on Tuesday.

Birla had set up the panel on 12 August last year after admitting a multi-party notice seeking Justice Varma's removal over corruption charges. The judge was repatriated from the Delhi High Court to the Allahabad High Court after burnt wads of currency notes were found at his official residence on 14 March.

Asked whether the issue would be taken up during the Budget session of Parliament beginning Wednesday, Rijiju declined to comment. "As per the procedure, the matter has been referred to the committee constituted by the Speaker with the consent of the House and the process is on," he told reporters. "While the committee is discharging its duty, we are waiting for the report to come. Before that, I cannot pass any comment."

The inquiry panel comprises Supreme Court judge Justice Aravind Kumar, Madras High Court Chief Justice Manindra Mohan Shrivastava, and senior Karnataka High Court advocate BV Acharya.

Officials said resignation preserves pension benefits, while removal results in forfeiture. *— PTI*

AIADMK to give Rs 10L to Jallikattu victims

CHENNAI, 27 JAN

AIADMK leader **Edappadi K Palaniswami** announced that if his party forms government, Rs 10 lakh relief will be given to bull tamers who die during Jallikattu. Insurance coverage will also be provided for registered tamers and bulls. Palaniswami flagged off the event at Salapalayam, reaffirming Jallikattu's cultural significance, and said, "The AIADMK will extend a relief of Rs 10 lakh to the tamer who dies during Jallikattu besides insurance for tamers and bulls registered for the traditional sport, when the party forms the government this year." *—PTI*

BJP Prez Nitin Nabin visits WB for 1st time

DURGAPUR, 27 JAN

BJP National President **Nitin Nabin** on Tuesday said the party is determined for West Bengal's progress, and asserted that the advancement of the state is necessary to achieve the goal of a developed India by 2047.

Nabin, in his first visit to the state after taking over the post, inaugurated the 'Kamal Mela', organised by the saffron party here.

"We are resolved to achieve the development of Bengal," he said after the inauguration of the fair in this industrial town in Paschim Bardhaman district.

Nabin also lauded the Bengal unit of the BJP for giving a platform to small traders by way of organising the fair.

An advanced Bengal is a necessity to achieve Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for a developed India by 2047, he said.

His maiden visit as the BJP chief holds significance as the assembly elections in the state are due in a few months. *—PTI*

WIKEPEDIA

UDF sits-in at Assembly over Sabarimala row

T'PURAM, 27 JAN

The Congress-led UDF opposition announced it would persist with protests demanding Kerala Devaswom Minister **VN Vasavan**'s resignation over the Sabarimala gold loss case, but will cooperate with House proceedings. Leader VD Satheesan said two MLAs, Najeeb Kanthapuram and CR Mahesh, would hold satyagraha outside the assembly. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan criticised the protest, stating it was an agitation against the Kerala High Court's monitoring of the investigation. The opposition had disrupted proceedings on 22 January, leading to the cancellation of the session. The case involves alleged misappropriation of gold from temple idols and the temple's sanctum, with 12 arrests made so far, including the prime accused. —

India more than good friend, partner: Israeli Min

TEL AVIV, 27 JAN

Israel's Culture and Sports Minister Miki Zohar expressed strong appreciation for India's relationship during a Republic Day event in Tel Aviv. He described India as more than a good friend, calling it "a strategic partner that we can trust". Zohar highlighted the significance of India's Republic Day, coinciding with Israel's recovery of the last Gaza hostage from Hamas's October 2023 attack, saying, "Our last hostage, Ran Gvili, came back home. The minister also spoke of ongoing high-level visits, including plans for a potential visit by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and the signing of a Bilateral Investment Treaty and terms for a Free Trade Agreement. *—PTI*

India to invest in Canada for critical minerals

BETUL, 27 JAN

India is keen on investing in extraction of critical minerals in Canada and will mount a delegation soon to discuss joint collaboration in the sector, Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said Tuesday.

Talking to reporters after meeting visiting Canadian Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Tim Hodgson on the sidelines of India Energy Week here, Puri said the two sides agreed to deepen bilateral energy trade, including supply of Canadian LNG, LPG, and crude oil to India, and supply of refined petroleum products from India to Canada. A joint statement issued after the meeting said they affirmed immense importance of energy security and diversity of supply.

"Canada has stated its goal of becoming an energy superpower in clean and conventional energy, with export diversification as a priority while India, as the epicentre of the global energy landscape, offers a natural and symbiotic partnership grounded in scale, stability, and long-term opportunity," it said.

"The ministers recognise the importance of joint commercial and investment partnerships in each other's energy sector," it said. *—PTI*

'WAS DEEPLY HURT'

UP official quits as caste, religion sparks row

AYODHYA/BAREILLY/ BHOPAL, 27 JAN

In an unusual act of protest that underscored growing strains at the intersection of religion, caste and governance, a senior tax official in Uttar Pradesh resigned this week, citing what he described as divisive rhetoric emanating from a religious seat.

Prashant Kumar Singh, a Deputy Commissioner under the Goods and Services Tax regime, stepped down on Tuesday after Shankaracharya Avimukteshwaranand allegedly made objectionable remarks against Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

In his resignation letter, Singh said he was "deeply hurt" by attempts to divide the country on caste and religious lines, particularly from Prayagraj, one of Hinduism's most sacred cities. He declared his support for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Adityanath, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and the Constitution.

The resignation highlighted how civil servants are increasingly being drawn into ideological disputes that blur the lines between administration and politics. Yet it also exposed tensions within the ruling BJP.

Prashant Kumar Singh *ANI*

Uma Bharti on Tuesday took exception to Adityanath government's alleged ill treatment of said Shankaracharya and questioning of his credentials by the state authorities. She said seeking proof of Shankaracharya's status was a violation of "decorum".

The episode followed a separate wave of resignations linked to University Grants Commission's new regulations on caste-based discrimination in higher education.

Critics argue the rules cast upper-caste students as presumptive perpetrators of discrimination. Together, the resignations reflect broader unease within administrative and political ranks over how caste and religious identity are being navigated in public policy. *—PTI*

AI

Non-veg menu in Howrah-Kamakhya Vande Bharat train

KOLKATA, 27 JAN

Non-vegetarian options will soon be available on India's first Vande Bharat sleeper train between Howrah and Kamakhya, an Eastern Railway official said on Tuesday. Passengers had raised concerns over only vegetarian meals being served on the six-day-a-week overnight service. The menu is expected to include non-vegetarian dishes within a week after a backlash about the matter. The train, flagged off by PM Narendra Modi on 17 January, serves Assamese cuisine from Kamakhya and Bengali cuisine from Howrah. *—PTI*

SCREENGRAB

Mumbai Metro flags Varun Dhawan's video

MUMBAI, 27 JAN

Metro authorities have flagged safety concerns after a video of 'Border 2' actor Varun Dhawan hanging from grab handles inside a coach went viral, warning that such acts are punishable. This video should have come with a disclaimer like the ones in action movies, the Maha Mumbai Metro Operation Corporation Limited (MMMOCL) stated. It posted the video on Monday, captioning it as: "Don't do this on Maha Mumbai Metro. Dhawan was apparently doing pull-ups by holding grab handles inside a metro coach, while a fellow passenger imitates him as others looked on. MMMOCL said grab handles inside metro coaches are meant only for support and not for hanging. *—PTI*

Masked thief snatches chain at AIIMS hospital

BHOPAL, 27 JAN

A masked individual snatched the chain of a female staff member at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) while exiting a lift in the high-security building on Sunday evening. The incident, caught on the lift's CCTV, has gone viral on social media. Rajshree Soni, the victim, was heading to the fourth floor when the thief fled as the doors opened. Police are examining the footage, have spoken to the victim, and are searching for the culprit. *—PTI*

Notorious criminal killed in TN encounter

PERAMBALUR, 27 JAN

A history-sheeter was shot dead in an "encounter" near Thirumanthurai in Perambalur district on Tuesday morning after he allegedly attacked a sub-inspector while trying to escape from custody, police said. The deceased, identified as Kottu Raja alias Azhaguraja, was a prime suspect in the recent attack on another notorious criminal, Vellai Kali. A gang of around 10 people, including Azhaguraja, had hurled country bombs at a vehicle transporting Vellai Kali back to Chennai's Puzhal central jail after a court appearance on 24 January. Azhaguraja was arrested on Monday. He confessed to hiding weapons used in the attack in a forest area. Azhaguraja attacked the SI. The SI opened fire accused died on the spot. The SI has been hospitalised. *—PTI*

Farmers & tribals march to Mumbai

Thousands march demanding regularisation of farms and other demands; govt for talks

MUMBAI, 27 JAN

Thousands of farmers and tribal residents were marching towards Mumbai from Nashik on Tuesday to press for land rights and other demands, as the Maharashtra government invited their delegation for talks later in the day, a representative of the protesters said.

The protesters, carrying red flags and led by the CPI(M)-affiliated All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), began the 'long march' on Sunday after a protest outside the Dindori tehsil office in Nashik district failed, former MLA J P Gavit told reporters.

They then decided to take their demands directly to the government by marching on foot to Mumbai, and have also made arrangements for food, grain, firewood and other essential supplies needed during their protest.

The marchers covered nearly 60 km over the past two days and began their descent through the Kasara Ghat on Tuesday.

Farmers and tribal residents take part in the All India Kisan Sabha's long march in Kasara. The march is being held from Nashik to Mumbai demanding land rights, relief for farmers and implementation of forest rights *PHOTO: PTI*

They have now left Nashik and have entered Thane district, Gavit said.

The protesters are seeking regularisation of cultivation on encroached land up to four hectares, issuance of land records, re-examination of rejected forest rights claims and procurement of agricultural produce from forest landholders at minimum support prices, Gavit said.

Meanwhile, tribals from areas falling within the Sanjay Gandhi National Park staged a protest outside the residence of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde in Thane against the demolition of their hamlets.

The tribals, who claimed they had been staying in the area for generations, condemned the administration's action of razing their dwellings on Monday and staged the protest outside Shinde's house late at night.

Vivek Pandit, chairperson of the state tribal development committee, told reporters that no demolition should be carried out until the 2018 rehabilitation plan is implemented and the affected families are resettled.

Later, following assurances from authorities for a discussion on the rehabilitation plan, the tribals called off the protest. *—PTI*

Around 5,000 farmers ended lives in Maharashtra in 2025

SAMBHAJINAGAR, 27 JAN

Around 5,000 farmers ended their lives in Maharashtra's Marathwada region in the last five years, with the highest number of suicides in 2025, an official report said on Wednesday.

1,129 farmers committed suicide in 2025, while a total of 5,075 suicides have been reported from 2021, said a report prepared by the divisional commissioner's office.

Marathwada division comprises the districts of Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Jalna, Parbhani, Nanded, Beed, Dharashiv, Hingoli and Latur.

Beed district recorded the highest number of suicides — 256 — in 2025. Ex gratia was given to the families of 193 farmers. *—Agencies*

A file picture of the Shri Mahakaleshwar Temple at Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh *PHOTO: PTI*

SC refuses plea on VIP darshan

NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

The Supreme Court declined to entertain a petition challenging the practice of 'VIP darshan' and preferential entry into the sanctum sanctorum of the Shri Mahakaleshwar Temple at Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh, saying the regulation of religious rituals and entry is not a "justiciable" matter.

On Tuesday, a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices R Mahadevan and Joymalya Bagchi, however, asked lawyer Vishnu Shankar Jain, representing petitioner Darpan Awasthi, to make a representation to the authority regarding this.

As the bench was not inclined to entertain the plea, Jain sought permission to withdraw it with the liberty to make a representation to the authorities.

The petition challenged a Madhya Pradesh High Court order that had dismissed objections to the preferential treatment given to VIPs for offering water to the deity.

The Chief Justice said there were limits to judicial intervention in temple management and it is for the people, who are at the helm, to decide such issues. *—PTI*

Plea against UGC's definition of caste bias

NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

A plea was filed in the Supreme Court challenging a recently notified University Grants Commission (UGC) regulation, alleging that it has adopted a non-inclusionary definition of caste-based discrimination which excludes certain categories from institutional protection.

The plea submitted that regulation 3(c) of the UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026, is "non-inclusionary" and fails to protect students and faculty who do not belong to reserved categories.

The plea, filed by Vineet Jindal, assailed the regulation on the grounds that caste-based discrimination is defined strictly as discrimination against members of the SCs, STs and OBCs.

It said by limiting the scope of "caste-based discrimination" only to SC, ST, and OBC categories, the University Grants Commission has effectively denied institutional protection to individuals belonging to the "general" or non-reserved categories who may also face harassment based on caste.

It said the provision in its present "exclusionary form" creates a hierarchy of protection that is unconstitutional.

The plea said the regulation violates the fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 14 (right to equality) and 15(1) (Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race. *—PTI*

Probe ordered into WB warehouse fire

KOLKATA, 27 JAN

The West Bengal government on Tuesday ordered a probe into a warehouse blaze in South 24 Parganas district which killed eight people.

Fire Services Minister Sujit Bose said preliminary investigation into a warehouse blaze revealed that the units lacked basic safety arrangements.

Bose, who inspected the site where a blaze ripped through two warehouses in the early hours of Monday, said a case will be filed in connection with the incident and a thorough inquiry conducted.

Bose said several people were still missing while some bodies had been recovered from the site. Director General of Fire Services, Ranvir Kumar, said the warehouses lacked clearance from the department, and that "clear violations had taken place".

The blaze erupted around 3 am on Monday, and it was still raging after 24 hours, with pockets of fire continuing to smoulder inside the gutted structures. — PTI

Madras HC scraps order to clear Vijay's 'Jana Nayagan'

CHENNAI, 27 JAN

The Madras High Court on Tuesday set aside the order of a single judge that directed the CBFC to grant censor certificate to the movie 'Jana Nayagan,' and said that certain references to the Army and religious sentiments require consideration.

The First Bench comprising Chief Justice M M Shrivastava and Justice G Arul Murugan stated that the single judge, Justice P T Asha, should have given time to the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) for filing a counter affidavit. The ruling makes the fate of the film, originally slated for a Pongal release earlier this month, uncertain. The film is stated to be Vijay's last, before his political entry. He heads the Tamiga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) party.

The Bench allowed an appeal filed by the CBFC, challenging the order of Justice Asha, dated 9 January, which also quashed a communication dated 5 January of the Regional Officer of the censor board, stating that based on a complaint from one of its members, the matter has been referred to the revising committee by the Chairperson.

The bench gave liberty to M/s KVN Productions LLP, producer of the mega budget movie, to amend the petition and approach the single judge for early hearing of its plea.

It stated that the single judge can decide whether the decision taken to refer the matter to revising committee is correct or not. *—PTI*

Posters of the Tamil film 'Jana Nayagan' released by the film's producers in Tamil Naduption *PTI*

Gujarat ATS arrests 'lone wolf' tailor ultra

AHMEDABAD, 27 JAN

The Gujarat ATS has foiled a conspiracy to attack some individuals in UP and arrested a person who was allegedly planning to operate as a "lone wolf" after being influenced by the Jaish-e-Mohammed, officials said on Tuesday.

The accused, Faizan Shaikh, was in the final stages of planning killings across UP for 'insulting' Prophet Mohammed, according to officials. The Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) recovered a pistol and six cartridges from him, which he intended to use for assassinations.The 22-year-old Shaikh, a tailor, originally from Rampur in UP, was staying in Navsari

Investigation showed that Shaikh and the wanted Mohd Abu Bakar planned to attack a specific community. The conspiracy involves inciting people for jihad to separate J&K and Ladakh, Joshi said.

The seized literature containing Arabic/Urdu text and photos, asked people to work for Al Qaeda, he said.

"Shaikh told interrogators that he had been in contact with Abu Bakar via WhatsApp, Instagram, and Telegram. About three months ago, he had joined a group via his Instagram ID 'al.faizangaza," said the DIG. In this group, photos of individuals who allegedly insulted the Prophet were circulated with requests to kill them.

The ATS claimed that Shaikh "confessed" to having purchased the pistol and cartridges six months ago from a person in UP. *—PTI*

CRIME BEAT

Kerala man kills kin in fake 'suicide'

KOZHIKODE, 27 JAN

The police here on Tuesday arrested a 36-year-old man for the murder of his young relative. What looked like a suicide on 24 January was actually a trap set by a man desperate to hide an illicit relationship. The 26-year-old victim was found in a critical state at an industrial unit owned by the accused in a village in Elathur last Saturday. The suspect, Vaisakh, who is a relative of the woman, claimed he found her hanging and rushed her to the hospital. Vaisakh lured the woman to the unit by convincing her that they should both end their lives. He set up two nooses to make the "suicide pact" look real. But the moment the woman put her neck in the loop, Vaisakh kicked the stool away. *—PTI*

2 minors held for raping 6-year-old

NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

The Delhi Police arrested two minor boys for allegedly raping a six-year-old girl in Delhi's Bhajanpura area, an official said on Tuesday. The incident took place on 18 January. The girl's family approached the police and a case was registered under BNS and the POCSO Act.Two of the juveniles were produced before the Juvenile Justice Board. Efforts are underway to trace the third one," the officer said. *—PTI*

KHAKI SPIRITUALISM

IPS officer asks MP madrasa students to read Gita too

BHOPAL, 27 JAN

- The IPS officer had been in the news earlier after he directed all police training schools in Madhya Pradesh to hold Bhagavad Gita recital sessions for recruits

A senior IPS officer in Madhya Pradesh addressed students of a madrasa here on Republic Day, urging them to read Bhagavad Gita along with Quran as this will help "enlighten their path."

Raja Babu Singh, Additional Director General of Police (Training), spoke to students of the institution based in the Doraha village of Sehore district via video conference.

"The maulana saab of the madrasa is my old friend. He requested me to address the students on Republic Day. I congratulated the students and asked them and their teachers to develop a concern for the environment, scientific temper and tolerance," Singh said. The IPS officer of the 1994-batch added that he also asked the students "to study Bhagavad Gita along with the Holy Quran as it has been enlightening humanity for centuries." Singh, who has earlier served as the BSF IG in Kashmir, said he told the students that India was a vast country and it was the duty of everyone to uphold its "integrity and unity, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari."

The IPS officer had been in the news in the past after he directed all police training schools in Madhya Pradesh to hold Gita and Ramcharitmanas recital sessions for all their recruits. *—PTI*

MP R-Day feast served to kids on paper scraps

MAIHAR, 27 JAN

Students of a government school in Madhya Pradesh's Maihar district were served the special Republic Day mid-day meal on scraps of waste paper and torn pages from old notebooks, instead of plates.

After video clips of the incident went viral, the district administration has ordered action, officials said on Tuesday.

The video shows students sitting on the floor and eating halwa-puri served to them on torn pages from old books. The incident occurred at the Government High School in Bhatigwan.

The PRO, Rajesh Singh, said action has been initiated.

A proposal for suspending the in-charge Principal of the Government High School, Sunil Kumar Tripathi, has been forwarded to the Commissioner, Rewa.

The one month salary of the contract employee, BRC Pradeep Singh, has also been deducted. *—PTI*

Students of a government school in Madhya Pradesh's Maihar district were served the special Republic Day mid-day meal on scraps of waste paper. *X/@SANGEETACONGRES*

Coast Guard flies cardiac patient to Kochi hospital

KOCHI, 27 JAN

In a race against time, the ICG has successfully evacuated a 55-year-old man from Agatti Island in the Lakshadweep archipelago after he suffered a life-threatening cardiac emergency. The rescue was carried out late Monday.

According to an Indian Coast Guard (ICG) release on Tuesday, the mission began when the Lakshadweep Administration sent an SOS to the Coast Guard regarding the patient's condition on 26 January. Recognising that every minute counted, the ICG's Kochi base readied a Dornier aircraft.

The aircraft touched down at Agatti, swiftly took the patient on board, and flew back to Kochi. After landing, the man was rushed to a private hospital. *—PTI*

WB TEACHERS AGAINST SIR

Teachers protest in Kolkata on Tuesday against the alleged harassment of people during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the poll bound state. The procession led by Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Hind began in the Rajabazar area of north-central Kolkata and culminated at Esplanade in the central part of the city, covering a distance of about 4.5 kms ***PHOTO: PTI***

Here's how FTA with EU will impact India's trade

India and the European Union (EU) on Tuesday announced the conclusion and finalisation of negotiations for the proposed free trade agreement (FTA).

This will be the 19th trade deal for India. The FTA will help boost the country's exports to the 27-nation bloc.

Since 2014, India has finalised seven trade pacts – Mauritius (April 2021 implemented), Australia (December 2022 implemented), UAE (May 2022 implemented), Oman (signed in December 2025), UK (signed in July 2025), EFTA (implemented in October 2025 – Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway), and New Zealand (talks concluded in December 2025).

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, European Council President Antonio and Prime Minister Narendra Modi sign the 'mother of all trade deals' in New Delhi on Tuesday ***PHOTO: PTI***

IMPORTANCE OF THIS FTA

The imposition of high tariffs by the US has disrupted the global flow of goods. The FTA is expected to help Indian exporters diversify their shipments. It will also help reduce dependence on China.

BENEFITS FOR INDIA AND THE EU

Tariffs or import duties are either reduced or eliminated under an FTA. Therefore, an FTA will open markets, align regulatory frameworks, and benefit key industries such as technology, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, and textiles.

Lower or zero import duties will make Indian exports, including from labour-intensive sectors, such as garments, leather, pharmaceuticals, steel, petroleum products, and electrical machinery, more competitive in the EU.

Similarly, Indian services exports, including telecommunications, business services, and transport, are also expected to grow significantly.

According to think tank GTRI, the EU will benefit from higher exports of aircraft and parts, electrical machinery, diamonds, and chemicals to India. European service sectors such as intellectual property, business services, and IT and telecommunications may also see gains.

BILATERAL TRADE

India's bilateral trade in goods with the EU was USD 136.53 billion in 2024-25 (exports worth USD 75.85 billion and imports worth USD 60.68 billion), making the EU India's largest goods trading partner.

The EU market accounts for about 17 per cent of India's total exports, and the bloc's exports to India constitute 9 per cent of its total overseas shipments.

In 2023-24, India exported USD 76 billion in goods and USD 30 billion in services to the EU, while the EU exported USD 61.5 billion in goods and USD 23 billion in services to India. Within the EU, Spain, Germany, Belgium, Poland and the Netherlands are key destinations for Indian exporters.

INDIA'S EXPORTS AND IMPORTS

Major exports are petroleum products (Diesel and ATF), electronics (including smartphones), textiles, machinery and computers, organic chemicals, iron and steel, gems and jewellery, pharmaceuticals, and auto parts.

Currently, India's textile exports to the EU face tariffs of 12-16 per cent, making Indian products less competitive than those from countries like Bangladesh and Vietnam, a GTRI report said.

Main imports are machinery, computers (including turbojets), electronics (including mobile phone parts and integrated circuits), aircraft, medical devices, scientific instruments, rough diamonds, organic chemicals, plastics, iron and steel, cars, and auto parts. India's key services exports to the EU are business services, telecommunications and IT, and transportation services, while imports are intellectual property services and telecommunications and IT.

ALCOHOL TRADE

India's exports to the EU in 2023-24 included wines (USD 1.5 million), blended whiskeys, vodka, brandy, and liqueurs (USD 64.9 million). Imports included wines (USD 412.4 million), blended whiskeys, brandy, gin, tequila, vodka, and liqueurs (USD 22.3 million).

FDI INFLOWS

India's cumulative FDI inflows from the EU from April 2000 to September 2024 totalled USD 117.4 billion, with about 6,000 EU firms operating in India. FDI from the EU accounted for 16.6 per cent of the cumulative FDI equity inflows from all countries, which stood at USD 708.6 billion.

India's FDI outflows to the EU totalled about USD 40.04 billion from April 2000 to March 2024, according to GTRI.

India mainly receives FDI from the Netherland (USD 55 billion), Germany (USD 15.4 billion), France (USD 12 billion), Spain (4.3 billion), Belgium (USD 4.1 billion), Italy (3.65 billion), Sweden (USD 2.8 billion), Denmark (USD 1.44 billion), and Poland (USD 788.75 million). *—PTI*

SALAR سالار

UN not perceived as delivering on peace: India

Amid ongoing geopolitical challenges, India said the United Nations is not perceived as an organisation that delivers on international peace, and discussions have moved on to "parallel plurilateral frameworks".

"The multilateralism of universal membership, with the United Nations at its core, is under strain. The challenges facing this organisation go far beyond the budgetary realm. Paralysis and lack of effectiveness in tackling conflicts remain a significant shortcoming," India's Permanent Representative to the **UN Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish** said here Monday.

In remarks to the UN Security Council Open Debate on 'Reaffirming International Rule of Law: Pathways to Reinvigorating Peace, Justice, and Multilateralism', Harish said people around the world do not perceive the United Nations as an organisation that delivers on international peace and security.

"Conversations and discussions have moved on to parallel plurilateral frameworks, some even involving private sector actors, to bring about outcomes on peace and security outside the United Nations framework," he said.

India's statement comes against the backdrop of the continued failure of the UN and its most powerful organ - the Security Council - to prevent and resolve global geo-political conflicts and maintain international peace and security.

US President Donald Trump has launched his 'Board of Peace' on Gaza, which is perceived as a rival to the UN.

Trump invited several global leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to join the Board of Peace that will work towards bringing lasting peace to Gaza and embark on a "bold new approach" to resolve "global conflict".

In a ceremony in Davos last week on the margins of the World Economic Forum, Trump formally ratified the Charter of the Board of Peace — establishing it as an official international organisation.

Trump will serve as the Board's Chairman.

Harish added that the application of the international rule of law calls for consistency, objectivity and predictability with no double standards.

"International law principles from the colonial era that have helped in self-determination and the emergence of new member states from colonial rule should not be weaponised to attack the unity and territorial integrity of states," Harish said. "Contexts and situations are ever changing, and if multilateralism treats outcomes and solutions as immutable and cast in stone and unable to pragmatically adapt to change, it would be an impetus for alternate formats of engagement to emerge."

Harish underlined that India upholds the rule of law as a cornerstone of its national governance, enshrined in its Constitution and reinforced through the independence of its judiciary and initiatives that expand access to justice.

"These deep roots of the rule of law in India at the national level inform and guide our commitment towards the rule of Law at the international level," he said.

At the Security Council, India asserted that the rule of law is "barren" without enforceability. "The focus must shift from arcane constructs to pragmatic solutions and outcomes that positively impact the daily lives of our citizens," Harish said.

He said the world is changing and transforming at a rapid pace across different domains. The legal and institutional framework governing the international rule of law must keep up with this rapidly transforming landscape. "Continuous review, updation and reinvigoration are imperative to avoid obsolescence."

Emphasising that for multilateralism and international rule of law to remain effective and credible, India said global governance structures must evolve to reflect contemporary realities.

"The current architecture of the UN, particularly the composition of the Security Council, reflects a geopolitical reality of a bygone era. In light of the profound global transformation of the last eight decades in power dynamics, demographics and the nature of global challenges, there is an urgent and compelling need to undertake comprehensive reform, including expansion in the permanent and non-permanent categories," he said.

He added that such reform is essential to enhance the Council's legitimacy and ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness.

Further, India said identifying and building on synergies among the principal organs of the UN would help in advancing the rule of law.

"This could result in greater alignment between mandates. Process-oriented reforms are instrumental for achieving these ends. Predictable and adequate resource provision, capacity-building and technical assistance tailored to local contexts are key elements of these reforms." *—PTI*

The horseshoe table of the United Nations Security Council in Geneva ***PHOTO: @UNGENEVA/X***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Russia to get over 70,000 Indians to plug its labour shortage

At least 40,000 Indian citizens are expected to come to Russia as workers in 2026.

This was recently announced by Boris Titov, Russia's special representative for relations with international organisations in the field of sustainable development, to the Russian news agency RIA Novosti. Vinay Kumar, the Indian ambassador in Moscow who also spoke with the agency, said between 70,000 and 80,000 Indian citizens were already working in Russia at the end of 2025.

This movement from India to Russia has its origins in an agreement on labour mobility signed in December 2025 at a meeting in New Delhi between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The document plans for a quota of over 70,000 Indian citizens for 2026.

EXPORTING UNEMPLOYMENT

Border crossing statistics show that the number of Indian citizens entering Russia is increasing. While around 32,000 people crossed the border in the first quarter of 2025 and 36,000 in the second quarter, that figure jumped to 63,000 in the third quarter.

Indian workers are recruited through official and unofficial agencies, which are largely responsible for making sure Indians get complete and accurate information about their future jobs. Wages for low-skilled Indian workers in Russia range from ₹475 to ₹950 ($555 to $1,111 or Rs 51,700 to Rs 1,00,3500) per month, which is above what they would earn at home.

In December, Russian news outlet Fontanka reported on a diverse group of Indian workers cleaning the streets of St Petersburg.

They said that they received monthly wages of around 1,00,000 Rubles (₹1,125/$1,316), free accommodation and meals. There are around 3,000 Indian citizens in St Petersburg.

An Indian diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that the labour agreement was also beneficial for India. "Russia needs workers, India needs to export unemployment," the diplomat explained.

WORK OR WAR?

The diplomat said a formal agreement was necessary to legalise Indian migration to Russia, which had long been "happening informally and chaotically."

In the past, this had often led to Indians becoming victims of fraud. For example, some Indians had signed contracts with the Russian army under false pretences and were sent to the war in Ukraine, the diplomat reported.

An agreement between the nations plans for New Delhi to send 70,000 Indian workers to Russia, as Moscow grapples with a labour shortage, while India struggles with unemployment ***PHOTO: AI***

Since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, 126 Indians have signed contracts with the Russian army, according to official figures. At least 12 Indian citizens have been killed on the Russian side, while 96 have returned to their homeland, according to the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

In 2024, during a visit to Moscow, Prime Minister Modi spoke with Putin about the repatriation of Indians who had already signed contracts with the Russian army and also about the need to prevent new recruits from joining the army.

Russian economist Igor Lipsits pointed out that one of the biggest challenges for most Indian citizens in Russia is overcoming the language barrier. The majority of Indian workers do not speak Russian, while a significant portion of the Russian population, especially in rural areas, does not speak English.

"This means that they can only be employed for the simplest jobs such as hauling, cleaning and shovelling snow," said Lipsits. In his opinion, cultural differences also limited the possibilities for integrating Indians into Russian society.

"I think they are focusing on India because they want to minimise the number of Muslims entering the country," said economist Andrei Yakovlev. "They are assuming that mainly Hindus will come."

Yakovlev does not see Indian workers as a solution to the labour shortage in Russia. Yakovlev said Russia needs skilled, not unskilled, workers.

WHY RUSSIA IS FOCUSING ON INDIA

In the wake of the deadly terror attack at Moscow's Crocus City Hall on 22 March, 2024 — which saw at least 143 people killed, large parts of the venue set ablaze and parts of the roof collapse — Russian authorities ratcheted up their rhetoric against migrants from Central Asia while restricting the number people permitted to immigrate from those countries.

As Lipsits noted, the countries in the region themselves are increasingly suffering from a labour shortage. The workers there are increasingly eying UK and Southern European markets, meaning that they seek higher wages, making Russia less lucrative, he said.

Russia's choice of India was not accidental. Rajan Kumar, a Russia expert at Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi, suspects Russia will likely pay the migrant workers in Indian rupees which it earns from oil trade. Trade turnover between India and Russia amounts to around $70 billion (₹60 billion), but Russia only buys $5 billion worth of goods from India. This means rupees are accumulating in Russia, expert explained.

RUSSIA'S LABOUR SHORTAGE

According to the Federal State Statistics Service, Russia had a total labour shortage of 2.2 million workers in 2024. The shortage is noticeable in industry, construction, logistics, medicine, trade and IT. However, experts emphasise that these estimates are only approximate values.

Yakovlev said the shortage was not caused solely by Russia's war in Ukraine.

"A recession is beginning. Companies are cutting working hours, and mass layoffs are possible this year," Lipsits added.

Indian experts are also cautious about the labour initiative. Lekha Chakraborty, a professor at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy in New Delhi, warned that Russian demand for workers was distorted and unstable due to the war. In her view, "post-conflict normalisation — or escalation — could rapidly compress wages, trigger layoffs and strand migrants." *—DW News*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Record heatwave as Australia boils at 50°C

MELBOURNE, 27 JAN

Parts of Australia sweltered under record heat on Tuesday as temperatures neared 50 degrees Celsius during a prolonged heat wave, authorities said. Rural towns of Hopetoun and Walpeup in Victoria recorded preliminary highs of 48.9°C, which, if confirmed, would surpass records set during the deadly Black Saturday bushfires in 2009. No casualties were reported, but officials warned of dangerous conditions as three forest fires burned out of control. Melbourne also approached a record high, prompting Australian Open organisers to activate extreme heat protocols, close stadium roofs and postpone matches on uncovered courts. Temperatures were expected to ease on Wednesday, though the heat wave is forecast to persist until the weekend. *—PTI*

Philippines grounds ferry fleet after 18 die

MANILA, 27 JAN

Philippine officials on Tuesday grounded the entire fleet of passenger ships belonging to a company that owned a ferry that sank in the south and left at least 18 people dead, with more than 300 others rescued. Ten people, mostly crew members and the captain of the M/V Trisha Kerstin 3, which sank early Monday off an island in Basilan province, are still missing. A search led by the coast guard and the navy continued where an oil sheen was spotted. Transport Secretary Giovanni Lopez said inspections would follow as all passenger ships of Aleson Shipping Lines, Inc., were grounded. At least 316 people were rescued after the sinking. *—PTI*

Hungary PM accuses Ukraine of election meddling

BUDAPEST, 27 JAN

Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban accused Ukraine of seeking to meddle in his country's elections and ordered Kyiv's ambassador to be summoned on Monday. Orban, facing elections in April, said Ukrainian leaders made "grossly offensive and threatening statements against Hungary and the Hungarian government." "Our national security services have evaluated this latest Ukrainian attack and determined that what happened is part of a coordinated series of Ukrainian measures to interfere in the Hungarian elections," he said. He has opposed Kyiv's EU aid & criticised President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. "If he feels comfortable in Moscow, it doesn't mean we should let European capitals become little Moscows," Zelenskyy said. *—PTI*

KP Assembly rejects Pakistan's peace board move

PESHAWAR, 27 JAN

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly has unanimously passed a resolution rejecting Pakistan's decision to join the US-led Board of Peace for Gaza launched by President Donald Trump. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif signed the charter at the World Economic Forum in Davos, drawing criticism from opposition parties. Moved by KP Law Minister Aftab Alam of the PTI and supported by JUI-F, the resolution said the move contradicts Pakistan's historic stance on Palestine and undermines Palestinians' right to self-determination. It described the board as a political forum operating under US and Israeli influence and warned it could harm Pakistan's national interests. The House urged the federal government to uphold Pakistan's principled position and oppose Israeli occupation. *—PTI*

US armada arrives near Iran as tensions rise

TEHRAN/WASHINGTON, 27 JAN

A US aircraft carrier and supporting warships arrived in the Middle East on Monday, as the tensions continue to rise between Washington and Iran over Tehran's crackdown on protesters.

The arrival of the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and several guided-missile destroyers provides the US increased ability to strike Iran. The warships began deploying from the Asia-Pacific region earlier this month, as US President Donald Trump threatened to strike Iran if it killed protesters, before backing off.

Trump told Axios on Monday that the situation was "in flux" but that Tehran had called Washington repeatedly because they wanted to "strike a deal".

"We have a big armada next to Iran. Bigger than Venezuela," Trump said.

However, the UAE's Foreign Ministry said on X that it would not give its airspace, territory or waters to the US to strike Iran.

Meanwhile, two of Iran's "Axis of Resistance" militant allies spread through the region warned that any US military aggression would be seen as an "act of war".

The Houthis in Yemen warned that they could start striking ships in the Red Sea again, while Hezbollah in Lebanon said that it would defend Iran but did not elaborate on how.

The death toll from the protests continued to rise.

The US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency said that at least 6,126 people were killed, nearly double Iran's official 3,117 figure.

A UN representative had earlier said that there were reports of at least 20,000 people killed.

The protests began over Iran's crumbling currency. On Tuesday it crashed to a new low, trading at 1.5 million Rial to USD 1. *—Agencies*

30 KILLED AS SOUTH US FREEZES

20 inches of snow in Pittsburgh as power outages cut heat

Norther Louisiana

X @LA_DOTD

KENNESAW, 27 JAN

At least 30 people have been killed as a deadly storm brought crippling ice to the South and deep snow to the Northeast of the US. It appeared to finally began to swirl out to sea on Monday, representing a light at the end of the tunnel.

But thousands of Americans were still without power or heat, and temperatures were forecast to plunge well below freezing by early Tuesday in areas where the ice storm did its worst damage.

The National Weather Service said areas north of Pittsburgh received up to 20 inches of snow and faced wind chills as low as minus 25 degrees Fahrenheit late Monday into Tuesday.

More than 8,00,000 power outages were reported nationwide on Monday morning, with more than 1,50,000 of them in the Nashville, Tennessee, area, according to poweroutage.com. About 1,40,000 remained without power in hard-hit Mississippi, and 1,15,000 more in icy Louisiana.

As temperatures across the South are expected to reach their coldest this week by early Tuesday morning, people without power are trying to survive.

> More than 8,00,000 power outages were reported nationwide on Monday morning, with more than 1,50,000 of them in the Nashville, Tennessee, area, according to power-outage.com.

Two people were reported as having been run over by snowploughs in Massachusetts and Ohio, while sledging accidents killed teenagers in Arkansas and Texas. A woman was also found dead by police after she was last seen leaving a Kansas bar.

Health authorities in the Southern state of Louisiana reported that two people had died from hypothermia, and icy weather brought down power lines in Tennessee.

At least 20 states have declared an emergency over the cold wave. *—AGENCIES*

Trump replaces border patrol chief with Czar

MINNEAPOLIS, 27 JAN

President Donald Trump on Monday ordered his border czar to oversee the immigration crackdown in Minnesota and declared that he was now on a "similar wavelength" as the state's Governor following the second fatal shooting by federal immigration officers this month. Trump removed Border Patrol commander Greg Bovina and replaced him with border czar Tom Homan.

Trump's statement came after Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem and Border Patrol Commander Gregory Bovino, who has become the public face of the crackdown, answered questions at news conferences over the weekend about Alex Pretti's shooting by an ICE officer. Trump said that Homan will report directly to him.

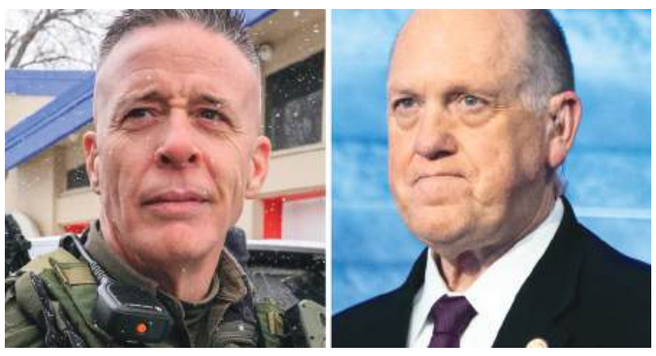


PHOTO: X

Border Patrol Commander Gregory Bovino; Border Czar Tom Homan

Bovino's departure marks a significant shift in federal law enforcement posture amid mounting outrage.

Meanwhile, Trump and Democratic Gov Tim Walz also spoke in a phone call and offered comments that were a marked change from the critical statements they have exchanged in the past.

"We, actually, seemed to be on a similar wavelength," the President wrote in a social media post.

Walz, in a statement, said the call was "productive" and that impartial investigations into the shootings were needed. Trump said his administration was looking for "any and all" criminals the state has in their custody. *—PTI*

TRUMP'S TARIFF PLAYBOOK

Trump increases tariffs on South Korean to 25%

WASHINGTON/ SEOUL, 27 JAN

US President **Donald Trump** said on Monday that he is increasing tariffs on South Korean goods to 25 per cent because the country's legislature is "not living up to its deal".

Trump said on his Truth Social that import taxes would be raised on autos, lumber and pharmaceutical drugs from South Korea with the rate on other goods going from 15 per cent to 25 per cent. Trump imposed the tariffs by bypassing Congress, while South Korea needed legislative approval for the framework announced in July.

South Korean lawmakers have submitted five bills on implementing South Korea's proposed $350 billion investment package to the National Assembly. The bills are currently before the assembly's finance committee.

NORTH LAUNCHES MISSILES

North Korea launched short-range ballistic missiles toward its eastern waters on Tuesday, according to its neighbours.

South Korea's military said it detected liftoffs of several ballistic missiles from an area northeast of North's capital, Pyongyang, before the missiles each flew about 350kms.

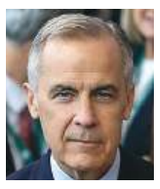
Japan's Defence Ministry said two ballistic missiles launched from North Korea landed off the eastern coast of the Korean Peninsula.

The launches were the first time North Korea fired weapons since testing what it called hypersonic missiles in early January.

North Korea's recent displays were likely meant to review its weapons development achievements ahead of the ruling Workers' Party congress. *—PTI*

'Trump's tariffs are a negotiating tactic'

TORONTO, 27 JAN



Canadian Prime Minister **Mark Carney** said on Monday that some of US President Donald Trump's threats should be viewed as a negotiating tactic.

Carney noted they are entering a review of the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement this year & said he expects a "robust review." "The President is a strong negotiator, and some of these comments and positioning should be viewed in the broader context of that," he said. Trump threatened this past weekend to impose a 100 per cent tariff on goods imported from Canada if it went ahead with a trade deal with Beijing, though Carney has said Canada has no interest in negotiating a comprehensive deal with China.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told Fox News that Carney "was very aggressively walking back some of the unfortunate remarks he made at Davos" after a call with Trump. *—PTI*

Starmer heads to China seeking thaw in relations

LONDON, 27 JAN

UK Prime Minister **Keir Starmer** is heading to China, seeking a thaw in relations with Beijing at a time of strained ties with the US.

He's hoping for an economic boost to Britain, but risks the wrath of China hawks at home – and of US President Donald Trump, who's already heaping tariffs and criticism on America's closest allies.

Starmer is due to meet China's President Xi Jinping during the visit that starts Wednesday, the first by a UK leader since 2018. He is expected to be accompanied by UK Business Secretary Peter Kyle and dozens of corporate chiefs as Britain seeks Chinese technology and investment, alongside greater access to the world's second-largest economy for UK financial services, cars and Scotch whisky. Ties increasingly soured between the two over China's alleged espionage attempts and its support for Russia-Ukraine war. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Next phase of ceasefire is not rebuilding Gaza: Netanyahu

KNESSET, 27 JAN

Israeli Prime Minister **Benjamin Netanyahu** on Monday said the next phase of Gaza ceasefire is not the reconstruction of Gaza but would focus on "disarming Hamas and the demilitarisation of the Gaza Strip".

Speaking at a special Knesset session, he said advancing this phase was in Israel's interest and should not be delayed. He said it would proceed "the easy way, or the hard way."

Meanwhile, Israel confirmed it received the final hostage body. The body of Ran Gvili, an Israeli police officer, was taken to Gaza after he was killed on 7 October, 2023. Israel had predicated the opening of the Rafah border on the retrieval of all the hostages.

Meanwhile, White House said 20 more countries had signed up to US President Donald Trump's 'Board of Peace'. *—ANI*

EU approves ban on Russian gas

BRUSSELS/ KYIV, 27 JAN

The European Union's 27 member states have officially adopted legislation to phase out Russian pipeline gas and LNG imports. The regulation includes measures for monitoring and diversifying energy supplies. The ban will commence six weeks after the regulation's entry into force, with a transition period for existing contracts. A full ban for LNG will begin in 2027, and pipeline gas in autumn 2027.

EU countries must verify the gas's origin before import approval. Non-compliance risks penalties up to EUR 2.5 million for individuals and EUR 40 million or 3.5 per cent of global turnover for companies. By 1 March 2026, nations must prepare diversification plans and notify authorities of Russian gas contracts.

However, in emergencies, the Commission can suspend the ban temporarily. The EU aims to phase out Russian oil by 2027, but Moscow still supplies 13 per cent of EU gas, worth over EUR 15 billion annually.

> **Over 10 years of war in Afghanistan, the Soviet army lost half as many troops as the Russians lost in just one month of this war**
>
> —Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukrainian President

RUSSIAN BOMBS UKRAINE

A heavy Russian drone bombardment of Ukraine's southern city of Odesa injured 23 people, including two children and a pregnant woman, officials said on Tuesday. The attack involved at least 50 drones and targeted Ukraine's power grid.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on X that such strikes "undermines diplomacy" and urged the US to expedite the peace deal as power remains cut in several regions of Ukraine. *—AGENCIES*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

BAN WON'T COVER EDU SITES

France to ban social media for U-15 kids

PARIS, 27 JAN

French lawmakers approved a bill banning social media for children under 15, paving the way for the measure to enter into force at the start of the next school year in September, as the idea of setting a minimum age for use of the platforms gains momentum across Europe.

The bill, which also bans the use of mobile phones in high schools, was adopted by a 130-21 vote late on Monday.

French President Emmanuel Macron has requested that the legislation be fast-tracked and it will now be discussed by the Senate in the coming weeks.

"Our children's brains are not for sale — neither to American platforms nor to Chinese networks. Because their dreams must not be dictated by algorithms," Macron said after the vote.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

The ban won't cover online encyclopedias, educational or scientific directories, or platforms for the development and sharing of open-source software.

> The ban won't cover online encyclopedias, educational or scientific directories, or platforms for the development and sharing of open-source software. The issue is one of the very few in a divided National Assembly.

The issue is one of the very few in a divided National Assembly to attract such broad support.

The French government had previously passed a law banning phone use in all primary and middle schools.

The vote came just days after the British government said it will consider banning young teenagers from social media, while Australia had earlier enacted such a ban.

According to France's health watchdog, one in two teenagers spends between two and five hours a day on a smartphone. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Gold & silver prices soar to a new lifetime highs

NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

Gold and silver prices dazzled in the national capital on Tuesday, with both precious metals vaulting to uncharted highs. The spike was driven by strong investor demand and a global rally amid rising geopolitical and trade tensions. According to marketmen, gold of 99.9 per cent purity increased Rs 7,300, or 4.6 per cent, to touch an all-time high of Rs 1,66,000 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes). The yellow metal had closed at Rs 1,58,700 per 10g on Friday. Silver prices continued its remarkable performance, outperforming gold for yet another session in the bullion markets. The white metal skyrocketed by Rs 40,500, or 12.3 per cent, to hit a new peak of Rs 3,70,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes). —*PTI*

DLF yet to recognise over Rs 55,000 cr in Q3 revenue

NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

DLF Ltd is yet to recognise over Rs 55,000 crore in revenue from property sales booked till the December quarter of the current fiscal, the company said in its latest investor presentation. The realty major has achieved cumulative sales bookings of Rs 79,885 crore, mainly from residential projects, while revenue recognised so far stands at Rs 24,460 crore. The remaining Rs 55,425 crore will be accounted for in future periods as projects progress or are completed. DLF reported a 16 per cent year-on-year decline in sales bookings to Rs 16,176 crore in the first nine months of this fiscal due to lower new supply. It, however, maintained its full-year guidance of Rs 20,000–22,000 crore. —*PTI*

Singapore adds Manipal Acad to medical degree list

SINGAPORE, 27 JAN

Singapore will recognise medical degrees from eight more overseas universities, including India's Manipal Academy of Higher Education, to meet rising demand for doctors. In a joint statement, the Ministry of Health and the Singapore Medical Council said the institutions will be added to the Second Schedule of the Medical Registration Act from 1 February, 2026, raising the number of recognised overseas medical schools from 112 to 120. The other universities are Adelaide University, University of Galway, University Sains Malaysia, Aga Khan University Medical College, Tsinghua University, University of Exeter and City St George's, University of London. Graduates from these schools can register to practise in Singapore. —*PTI*

UST and Muthoot seal Rs 500 cr digital deal

NEWDELHI, 27 JAN

American technology firm UST has signed a Rs 500 crore digital transformation deal with Muthoot FinCorp Ltd and other companies under the Muthoot Pappachan Group (Muthoot Blue) to strengthen their IT, cloud, data centre and cybersecurity operations. The six-year agreement, running until 2031, expands a partnership that began in 2020. Under the deal, UST will manage the technology ecosystem for eight group entities, covering more than 4,200 branches across 29 states. UST will deploy a modern technology stack with advanced cyber security, including Zero Trust architecture, AI-led threat detection and automated incident response. It will also drive hybrid and multi-cloud modernisation to improve performance, resilience and disaster recovery across mission-critical systems. —*PTI*

Adani, Embraer to make regional aircraft in India

Both groups will also establish FAL for the aircraft mfg

NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

Adani Group and Brazilian major Embraer on Tuesday announced a strategic collaboration that aims to set up a regional aircraft manufacturing facility in India, a significant boost for the country's indigenous manufacturing capabilities.

India is one of the world's fastest growing civil aviation markets and the partnership will look to help enhance air connectivity to Tier 2 and 3 cities.

Officials of Adani Defence & Aerospace and Embraer inked the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the strategic collaboration on regional transport aircraft in India at a function at the civil aviation ministry in the national capital on Tuesday.

Both companies will also set up a Final Assembly Line (FAL) for the regional aircraft of Embraer in the country.

Embraer and Adani Defence & Aerospace announce strategic partnership to establish regional transport aircraft ecosystem in India *X/EMBRAER*

Embraer makes commercial jets with up to 150 seats.

Details about the investments and the location of the proposed facility were not disclosed.

The companies aim to collaborate on opportunities in aircraft manufacturing, supply chain, aftermarket services, and pilot training, a release said.

The venture with the Adani Group will be a major fillip for the Brazilian major in India's civil aviation space where it aims to provide cost-competitiveness with its regional jets.

- The companies aim to collaborate on opportunities including manufacturing of the aircrafts, supply chain, aftermarket services, and training of the pilots

Currently, Embraer, whose E-Jets began operations in India in 2005, has nearly 50 aircraft in the country serving in India. Additionally, speaking on the partnership, Arjan Meijer, President and CEO of Embraer highlighted that while India has a massive aircraft backlog of around 1,700 units, the regional segment remains underserved. —*Agencies*

HEAVY BUYING IN BANK

Markets bounce back amid optimism over India-EU FTA

MUMBAI, 27 JAN

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended higher in highly volatile trade on Tuesday, buoyed by heavy buying in bank and metal stocks, a firm trend in global markets and optimism over India-EU FTA.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 319.78 points, or 0.39 per cent, to settle at 81,857.48. During the day, it hit a high of 82,084.92 and a low of 81,088.59.

The 50-share NSE Nifty surged 126.75 points or 0.51 per cent to end at 25,175.40.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Adani Ports, Axis Bank, Tata Steel, Tech Mahindra, NTPC, State Bank of India, UltraTech Cement and Bharat Electronics were among the biggest gainers.

Axis Bank jumped over 4 per cent after the firm reported a 4 per cent growth in its December quarter net profit to Rs 7,010.65 crore against Rs 6,742.99 crore in the year-ago period.

- From the 30-Sensex firms, Adani Ports, Axis Bank, Tata Steel, Tech Mahindra, NTPC, State Bank of India, UltraTech Cement and Bharat Electronics were among the biggest gainers

In contrast, Mahindra & Mahindra, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Asian Paints, Eternal and ITC were among the laggards.

India and Europe on Tuesday announced the sealing of an ambitious free trade agreement -- billed as "mother of all deals" -- that came against the backdrop of a fractious global environment and trade disruptions largely caused by Washington's policy on tariffs.

Equity markets were closed for Republic Day. —*PTI*

RUPEE RECOVERS 19P FROM ALL-TIME LOW

MUMBAI, 27 JAN

The rupee rebounded from its all-time low levels and gained 19 paise to close at 91.71 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, on decline in US dollar index and India-EU FTA negotiations.

Forex traders said the rupee recovered marginally as traders rushed to cover broad dollar weakness.

Moreover, the deal over India-EU FTA boosted domestic market sentiments. However, rising commodity and crude oil prices capped sharp gains.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 91.82 and lost ground to touch an intra-day low of 91.90 against the greenback. The domestic unit settled for the day at 91.71 (provisional), registering a gain of 19 paise from its previous close.

On Friday, the rupee hit a historic low of 92 per dollar and gained marginally to settle at 91.90 against the American currency.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which measures the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.02 per cent lower at 97.01. —*PTI*

DIGITAL SERVICES UNAFFECTED

Bank employees, under the banner of the United Forum of Bank Unions, protest for the implementation of a five-day banking week in Bhopal *ANI*

Bank strike disrupts services as Unions seek 5-day work

NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

Banking operations at public sector banks across the country faced disruption on Tuesday as the United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU) went on a nationwide strike demanding immediate implementation of a five-day work week.

The strike by the UFBU, an umbrella body of nine unions representing bank officers and employees, followed the failure of a conciliation meeting with the Chief Labour Commissioner on 23 January.

"Since there was no positive outcome and the government did not agree to our demand, hence this strike is forced on us. Bank employees and officers are highly aggrieved that they alone are being discriminated against," All India Bank Employees Association General Secretary CH Venkatachalam told PTI.

Most branches of public sector banks were either fully or partially closed as employees and officers joined the strike. Essential services such as cash deposits and withdrawals, cheque clearances and routine administrative work were affected across public sector lenders and some old-generation private banks.

Major private sector banks, including HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and Axis Bank, remained largely unaffected as their staff are not members of the striking unions. Digital banking services, including UPI, continued to function, although ATM cash availability could face localised disruptions due to logistical delays. Several public sector lenders had warned customers about possible disruptions. —*PTI*

INDIA'S ENERGY SECTOR OFFERS $500B OPPORTUNITY IN INVESTMENT: MODI

NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said India's energy sector offers USD 500 billion in investment opportunities as the country accelerates reforms and moves from energy security towards energy independence.

Addressing India Energy Week 2026 via video conferencing, he said India is targeting USD 100 billion in upstream investments by the end of the decade after opening one million square kilometres for oil and gas exploration.

Modi said India aims to raise natural gas's share in the energy mix to 15 per cent by 2030, creating opportunities across LNG, pipelines and city gas distribution. He noted India is among the world's top five exporters of petroleum products, supplying over 150 countries.

Highlighting downstream potential, Modi said India, currently the world's second-largest refiner with 260 million tonnes per annum capacity, is poised to become the global leader by expanding capacity beyond 300 million tonnes. —*PTI*

20% ethanol blending saved $19.3B in forex: Gas Minister

GOA, 27 JAN

India achieved nearly 20 per cent ethanol blending in Ethanol Supply Year 2025, saving USD 19.3 billion in foreign exchange and paying over USD 15 billion to farmers in a decade, Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said Tuesday.

At the 4th India Energy Week 2026 inauguration in Goa, he outlined balancing energy transition with economic security, saying India remains on track on compressed biogas as renewables rose from "one-fifth to nearly one-third" of global electricity generation, yet "conventional energy will remain essential".

By 2050, India's share of global energy demand is projected to rise by nearly 30-35 per cent, reaching around 10 per cent.

The government is expanding the full energy mix, lifting nuclear ambition to 100 GW by 2047 under the Atomic Energy Bill 2025 SHANTI.

Minister Puri said fuel-prices stayed below 2021 levels, LPG for over 100 million PMUY-users costs USD 5.5-6, petroleum is 28 per cent of port-trade, shipbuilding-investment gets USD 8 billion, GCC-revenue may hit USD 105 billion by 2030. —*ANI*

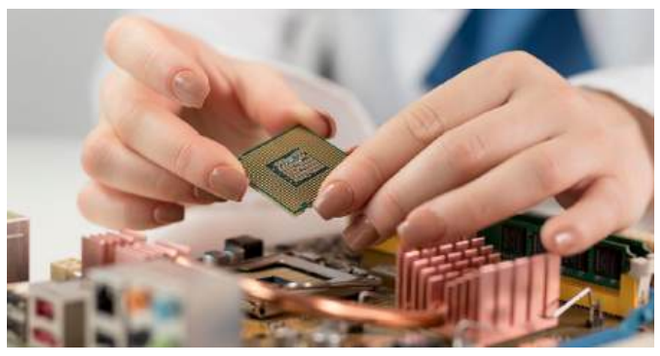
Govt aims to make high-tech 3 nanometre chips by 2032

NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

The government is aiming to make high-tech small chips of 3-nanometre node -- used in products like modern smartphones and computers -- by 2032, Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Tuesday.

The minister said the government will focus on six categories of chips -- compute, radio frequency (RF), networking, power, sensor, and memory -- under the second phase of Design-Linked Incentive Scheme that will allow companies in the country to have major control on developing 70-75 per cent technology products.

"The level of 2032 is to reach 3-nanometer chips manufacturing and design. Design, of course, we are doing even today. But manufacturing we should reach 3 nanometer," the minister said, after meeting with 24 chip design firms that have been selected under the Design-Linked Incentive Scheme.



Vaishnaw said the government wants to focus on six major systems "so that we develop our complete semiconductor design ecosystem in a very comprehensive way".

He said every sector will require a combination or a permutation of these six types of chips. —*PTI*

WeWork India posts profit in Q3 despite loss in US

NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

Realty firm WeWork India on Tuesday reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 16.78 crore in the third quarter of this fiscal, underscoring the contrast with parent WeWork's bankruptcy and restructuring in the United States. The company had posted a net loss of Rs 83.11 crore a year ago, while total income rose to Rs 643.81 crore in the October–December period, according to a regulatory filing.

For the first nine months of the fiscal, net profit stood at Rs 9.04 crore on income of Rs 1,775.07 crore. WeWork India, promoted by Bengaluru-based Embassy Group, operates 73 centres across eight cities, covering 8.2 million square feet.

Managing Director and CEO Karan Virwani said the company's focus remains on "profitable growth, technology-led differentiation, and sustainable portfolio expansion"

Globally, WeWork collapsed after a failed IPO and filed for bankruptcy in the US, while India's franchise model and local ownership have enabled sustained profitability growth. —*AGENCIES*

ON 1 FEBRUARY

FM to surpass record with 9th consecutive Budget

NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present a record ninth consecutive Budget on 1 February, which is expected to contain reform measures aimed at shoring up economic growth amid a volatile geopolitical situation.

This will take Sitharaman closer to the record of 10 Budgets that were presented by former Prime Minister Morarji Desai over different time periods. Desai presented a total of 6 Budgets during his tenure as finance minister in 1959-1964, and 4 budgets between 1967-1969.

Former finance ministers P Chidambaram and Pranab Mukherjee had presented nine and eight Budgets, respectively, under different prime ministers.

Sitharaman, however, will continue to hold the record of presenting the most Budgets on the trot - nine straight Budgets under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

She was in 2019 appointed as India's first full-time woman finance minister when Prime Minister Modi won a decisive second term. After Modi came back to power in 2024 for the third time, Sitharaman continued to retain her finance portfolio.

So far, she has presented a total of eight straight Budgets, including an interim one in February 2024.

Here are some facts related to the Budget presentation in Independent India.

Sitharaman holds the record for the longest Budget speech when her presentation on 1 February, 2020, lasted two hours and 40 minutes. At the time, she cut short her speech with two pages remaining. —*PTI*

CENTRE'S FY27 CAPEX MAY CROSS RS 12 LAKH CRORE: SBI

Capital expenditure by the central government is expected to surpass Rs 12 lakh crore in FY27, marking a year-on-year growth of around 10 per cent, according to a report by the SBI. The report highlighted a steady rise in government-led capex, reflecting a continued focus on infrastructure creation and economic growth. Total capital expenditure through the Budget has increased from Rs 2.5 lakh crore in FY16 to Rs 11.2 lakh crore in FY26, while grants for capital assets rose from Rs 1.3 lakh crore to Rs 4.3 lakh

crore. Capital expenditure by Central Public Sector, funded through internal and extra-budgetary resources, stood at Rs 4.3 lakh crore in FY26. Combined, capex reached Rs 15.5 lakh crore, with overall, including grants, rising from Rs 7 lakh crore in FY16 to Rs 19.8 lakh crore in FY26. —*PTI*

U19 WC: India crush Z'babwe by 204 runs

Vihaan, Abhigyan shines as India continue winning streak in the U-19 World Cup

BULAWAYO, 27 JAN

India secured a commanding 204-run victory over Zimbabwe in their opening Super Six match at the U-19 World Cup in Bulawayo on Tuesday, continuing their winning streak from the group stage. Young middle-order bat Vihaan Malhotra scored a fine century, demonstrating maturity and composure, while Abhigyan Kundu contributed a fluent 61. India posted a formidable 352 for 8, with Malhotra's unbeaten 109 off 107 balls, including seven fours. Kundu's 62-ball innings included five fours and a six.

Zimbabwe's bowlers struggled to contain the Indian batsmen, who were relentless from the start. The pace duo of RS Ambrish (2/19) and Henil Patel (1/25) dominated the first nine overs, reducing Zimbabwe to 24 for 3. Zimbabwe was eventually bowled out for 148 in 37.4 overs, with India's bowlers sealing the victory comfortably.

Vihaan Malhotra scores a brilliant century X/BCCI

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Captain Ayush Mhatre's part-time off-spin (3/14) and left-arm seamer Udhav Mohan (3/20) supported the attack as Zimbabwe's tail-end was dismissed. India's dominance was clear as they reached 100 in just 62 balls, with Vaibhav Suryavanshi leading the charge with a quickfire 52 off 30 balls, including four fours and sixes.

Despite losing Mhatre (21) and Suryavanshi in quick succession at 101 for 3 during the 11th over, India regained momentum through Malhotra and wicketkeeper Kundu. Malhotra's century came off 104 balls, as he and Kundu added a crucial 113-run partnership for the fifth wicket, lifting India from 130 for 4 to 243 for 5 by the 36th over. Kundu's second half-century in three innings showcased his consistency, following an 80 against Bangladesh and an unbeaten 42 against the USA.

Malhotra's return to form bolsters India's middle order, an area previously considered a weakness. He also shared a 52-run stand with Ambrish and later combined with tailender Khilan Patel (30) to add another 47 runs, helping India breach the 350-run mark.

Zimbabwe's chase faltered early, with Ambrish and Patel's pace attack reducing their chances. Kian Blignaut (37 off 73 balls) and Leeroy Chiwaula (62 off 77 balls) showed resilience but couldn't accelerate, as Zimbabwe reached 100 in the 28th over with the required run rate beyond manageable levels.

The brief scoreboard is as follows: India 352/8 in 50 overs (Suryavanshi 52, Malhotra unbeaten 109, Kundu 61); Zimbabwe 148 in 37.4 overs (Chiwaula 62, Blignaut 37); India won by 204 runs. —*PTI*

Fernandez, 18, from Barcelona joins PSG

PARIS, 27 JAN

Paris Saint-Germain have signed 18-year-old midfielder Dro Fernandez from Barcelona on a four-year deal. The club confirmed the move on Monday, describing it as "fully in line with PSG's sporting strategy and focus on youth and talent." While financial details were not officially disclosed, French sports daily L'Équipe reported a fee of €8 million ($9.5 million). Dro, who can play as an attacking midfielder or left winger, made five appearances for Barcelona this season after progressing through the prestigious La Masia academy, which has produced stars like Lionel Messi and Lamine Yamal. "I'm proud and motivated to give everything for this shirt," he said.—*PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

F1 legend Schumacher no longer bedridden

GERMAN, 27 JAN

Formula One legend Michael Schumacher, 57, who suffered a severe brain injury in a ski accident 12 years ago, is reportedly no longer bedridden. Sources tell the Daily Mail he can now sit in a wheelchair and be moved around his £30 million Majorca estate and £50 million home at Gland on Lake Geneva. Schumacher's care is overseen by his wife Corinna and a team of nurses and therapists, providing 24-hour support at tens of thousands of pounds a week. Contrary to rumours, he is not in a pseudocoma or locked-in state, though he may not fully understand everything around him. His family fiercely guards his privacy. —*AGENCIES*

Security role for ICE agents at Milan Cortina Olympics

MILAN, 27 JAN

US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents are set to have a security role during the upcoming Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics, sources at the US embassy in Rome have confirmed. The agents will support diplomatic security for US officials and will not conduct immigration enforcement operations. In previous Games federal agencies, including ICE's investigative arm Homeland Security Investigations, assisted with such security. Milan Mayor Giuseppe Sala criticised the plan, saying ICE "are not welcome in Milan" and their methods conflict with democratic approaches to security. Italian authorities have given mixed statements, with Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi noting no official confirmation but suggesting he saw "no problem." The announcement follows footage of ICE threatening a RAI crew in Minneapolis.—*PTI*

India eye sparkling outing from spinners in 4th T20I vs NZ

VISAKHAPATNAM, 27 JAN

India is hoping for a positive turn in their spinners' performance while attempting to extend the total domination over New Zealand in the fourth T20I here on Wednesday.

The batting storm kicked up by Abhishek Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav and Ishan Kishan and the resultant 3-0 series lead has so far masked the underwhelming outings of two premier spinners -- Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakravarthy.

Kuldeep has picked up two wickets in as many matches, but looked a distant shadow of his bewitching self, conceding 9.5 runs an over. The left-arm wrist spinner had three expensive overs, that leaked 32 runs, even when India limited the Kiwis to 153 for 9 riding on brilliant spells by Jasprit Bumrah, Ravi Bishnoi and Hardik Pandya.

Chakravarthy, who was rested for the third T20I, is a slightly different case as he has played in two high-scoring matches when the visitors scored 190 and 208.

India is also pondering over whether to persist with Bishnoi (4-0-18-2 at Guwahati) in the fourth match, and bring back Chakravarthy in place of Kuldeep to allow the latter some breathing space.

India will also keep a close eye on the fitness of all-rounder Axar Patel, as he has not played since the first game at because of a finger injury.

Kristian Clarke and Tim Robinson have been released from the BLACKCAPS T20 squad in India. now in camp. X/NW

With regards to batting, the top-order reshaped India's T20 batting in this series and third match resembled an extended Power Play. Abhishek has scored at a strike-rate of over 300 while Suryakumar and Kishan have maintained a strike-rate close to 230.

Such has been the fury in their batting that India have so far spent only a combined 25.2 overs in the park while chasing 209 and 154 (363 runs in total) in the second and third T20Is. —*PTI*

T20 WORLD CUP

ICC reworking B'desh media accredition for T20 WC

DHAKA, 27 JAN

The International Cricket Council is reworking its media accreditation process for Bangladeshi journalists following Bangladesh's withdrawal from the T20 World Cup in India, citing security concerns, even as Scotland expressed confidence that its players will receive visas in time for the tournament.

ICC sources said the application process for travelling media is being adjusted to reflect changes in schedules and the number of accreditation requests after Bangladesh pulled out. "There is a reworking of the process since there is a change in the number of requests and the schedules. The accreditation lists are being worked out accordingly," an ICC source said.

Bangladesh's exit opened the door for Scotland to join the tournament at short notice. Scotland will begin their campaign against West Indies in Kolkata on 7 February.

Cricket Scotland chief executive Trudy Lindblade said she was optimistic that all players, including Pakistan-origin fast bowler Safyaan Sharif, would secure Indian visas in time. Applicants of Pakistani origin typically face additional scrutiny, which can lengthen processing times. "We are all committed to working with the ICC to make that happen," Lindblade was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

Scotland have also included Afghan-born uncapped pacer Zainullah Ihsan in their 15-member squad. Ihsan is the only first-time call-up, having recently qualified to play for Scotland.

Richie Berrington will captain a settled squad featuring 11 players from the 2024 T20 World Cup in the West Indies and the United States. The selection marks the first squad named by new head coach Owen Dawkins, appointed last month. —*PTI*

When it's time, it's time: KL Rahul on retirement

NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

KL Rahul has stated that the thought of retirement has crossed his mind but remains "some time away". The India batter told former England captain Kevin Pietersen on his YouTube channel that retiring wouldn't be difficult as there's life beyond cricket. Rahul said, "If you're honest with yourself, when it's time, it's time. And there's no point dragging it. Obviously, I'm some time away." The 33-year-old from Bengaluru, who has scored 4,053 runs in 67 Tests at 35.8, and 3,360 in 94 ODIs at 50.9, also has 2,265 runs in 72 T20Is at 37.75. Rahul considers himself not a superstar, which he believes makes the decision easier, saying, "Just quit. Just enjoy the stuff that you've got and you have your family and just do that. That's the hardest battle." He said it is the mental battle. —*PTI*

Sabalenka beats 18-year-old Iva

MELBOURNE, 27 JAN

Aryna Sabalenka beat 18-year-old Iva Jovic 6-3, 6-0 to reach the semifinals of the Australian Open on Tuesday before searing heat on Day 10 forced matches to be played under cover.

Alexander Zverev got the benefit of playing under a roof at Rod Laver Arena and advanced to the final four with a 6-3, 6-7 (5), 6-1, 7-6 (3) win over 20-year-old Learner Tien.

The No. 3-ranked Zverev, last year's runner-up in Australia, reached his 10th Grand Slam semifinal on the back of 24 aces and just a single double-fault -- which he served when he had six match points in the deciding tiebreaker.Top-ranked Sabalenka, also a runner-up in Melbourne last year, is aiming for her third Australian Open title in four years. She won back-to-back titles here in 2023 and 2024 and lost the final a year ago to Madison Keys."I guess, yeah, as a woman, we are stronger than the guys," Sabalenka said her later news conference, laughing. "So they had to close the roof for the guys so they don't suffer!"

The temperature topped 42 Celsius (108 F) at 5 p.m. local time, but started to drop ahead of the night session. Play was suspended on outside courts all afternoon. —*PTI*

Racer Atiqa Mir debuts at WSK: first Indian to seal P2 qualifier

LA CONCA, 27 JAN

Eleven-year-old racing prodigy Atiqa Mir made a remarkable debut in the WSK Super Master Karting Series, becoming the first Indian to set the second-fastest time in a male-dominated grid of 37 experienced drivers. Moving from mini (8-11) to junior (12-14) category in 2026, Atiqa showcased her speed in the OKNJ class.

She was one of the youngest drivers on the grid and defied odds to qualify just behind the pole position, missing it by only a tenth of a second. The only female on the grid, she clocked 49.76 seconds before Finland's Leo Latinen edged her out in the final moments, earning P2 on debut, a historic achievement.

Atiqa started on the front row in all three heats, finishing 4th, 6th, and 7th, and recorded the fastest lap in heat 1. However, mechanical failure prevented her from starting the pre-final, relegating her to 18th.

She started the final from 22nd after being pushed off in Turn 1 but recovered to finish 14th out of 37 drivers. Her father, Asif Mir, a former Formula Asia Vice-Champion, said she surpassed his expectations. --*PTI*

FORMER AUS BOWLER KANE QUITS AT 34

MELBOURNE, 27 JAN

Former Australian fast bowler Kane Richardson, 34, announced his retirement on Tuesday. A Big Bash League original, he played for Adelaide Strikers, Melbourne Renegades, winning the 2018-19 title, and Sydney Sixers, taking 142 wickets. He announced it on Instagram and via the Australian Cricketers' Association.

"I would like to announce my retirement from professional cricket at the conclusion of this BBL. From making my debut back in 2009 until now, I feel like I have squeezed every drop out of myself, and it is the right time to finish such an enjoyable part of my life," Richardson said.

"I would like to thank all the coaches, administrators, and fellow players who have shaped my career, particularly those from my early days in South Australia and the Northern Territory," he added.

"I've been fortunate enough to represent my country, along with many franchise teams around the world, and in Australia. I have never taken the opportunity lightly, and I hope the people watching knew that. —*ANI*

Fell short by 15 runs short, but learning clear, says RCB's Ghosh

VADODARA, 27 JAN

Royal Challengers Bengaluru fell short by 15 runs in a close contest against Mumbai Indians, despite a spirited effort led by wicketkeeper-batter Richa Ghosh, according to a team statement. Coming in at 31 for 4, Ghosh scored a rapid 90 off 50 balls, hitting Amanjot Kaur with three consecutive sixes in the penultimate over and nearly carrying her team to victory.

Reflecting on her approach, Ghosh explained her strategy. She said her plan was simple: to win the match. With wickets falling, her aim was to take the game deep and pressure the opposition. She credited Nadine for clarity at the crease and praised Aru and Shreyanka's support for their good shots. Ghosh stated, "We fell 15 runs short, but the learning is clear. We need to analyse the game, understand what we can do differently on this ground, and take that forward."

RCB's Richa Ghosh ANI

Head Coach Malolan Rangarajan praised Ghosh's character, highlighting her attitude after the match. Assistant Coach Anya Shrubsole stressed the importance of giving oneself time in chasing high totals. Rangarajan affirmed that the team's larger objectives remain unchanged, aiming to top the table, and emphasised honest review and quick recovery. —*ANI*

FOOTBALL UNDER CLOUD

Germany threatens to pull out of FIFA

BERLIN, 27 JAN

A senior member of the German Football Association has called for discussions on a potential boycott of the men's World Cup, citing concerns over the actions of US President Donald Trump, while Spain has claimed it will host the final of the 2030 tournament.

Oke Göttlich, president of Bundesliga club St. Pauli and one of the German FA's vice-presidents, said the "time has come" to seriously consider a boycott of the 2026 World Cup, which will be co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico. Speaking to the Hamburger Morgenpost, Göttlich compared the situation to the Olympic boycotts of the 1980s, arguing that the current political threat was even greater.

Trump has unsettled European allies through a takeover bid for Greenland and threats of tariffs against European nations opposing it, raising fears of a rupture within NATO. Göttlich also criticised what he saw as inconsistency in football's stance on politics, contrasting objections to the Qatar World Cup with silence over the United States. He acknowledged resistance from German FA president Bernd Neuendorf and FIFA president Gianni Infantino.

Meanwhile, Spanish FA president Rafael Louzán said Spain would host the final of the 2030 World Cup, which will be co-hosted by Spain, Portugal and Morocco. FIFA has yet to confirm the venue. Madrid's Santiago Bernabeu and Barcelona's renovated Camp Nou are contenders, while Morocco's hopes may have been dented by organisational issues at the Africa Cup of Nations.

Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay will each stage one match to mark the tournament's centenary. —*PTI*

Oke Göttlich, one of the German FA's vice-presidents, said "time has come" to seriously consider a boycott of the 2026 World Cup WIKIPEDIA

- Göttlich criticised what he saw as inconsistency in football's stance on politics, contrasting objections to the Qatar World Cup with silence over the United States. He compared the situation to the Olympic boycotts of 1980s, arguing that the current political threat was even greater.